

ST THE SUNDAY TIMES

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KOPITIAM ACQUISITION



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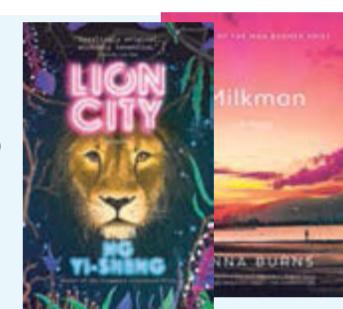
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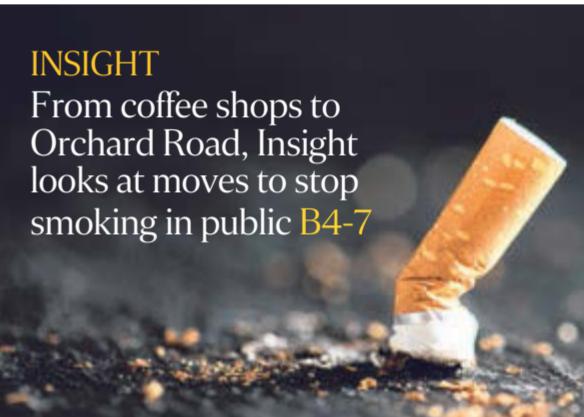


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Trump may declare national emergency to build border wall

He threatens to keep US govt shut for months, or even years, if he doesn't get funding for it

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump has threatened to keep the federal government partly closed for months, or even years, if he does not get US\$5.6 billion (\$87.6 billion) for his wall at the southern border.

He also warned that he was considering declaring a national emergency to build it without congressional approval.

Mr Trump and Democratic leaders emerged from a two-hour meeting last Friday in the White House Situation Room without a deal to reopen government agencies that have been shuttered for two weeks. The two sides offered sharply contrasting views of where they stood.

By the end of the day, the two sides appeared to be still locked in a stalemate. Democrats called the meeting "contentious", while the President and Republican leaders in the House called it "productive".

And while Mr Trump announced that he had assigned Vice-President Mike Pence to lead a working group to negotiate with Democrats over the weekend, Democrats said the phrase "working group" was never discussed.

"We told the President we needed the government open," Senator Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader, told reporters outside the White House.

"He resisted. In fact, he said he'd keep the government closed for a very long period of time, months, or even years."

Appearing in the Rose Garden later, Mr Trump confirmed the remark. "I did say that. Absolutely I said that," he said, flanked by Mr

Pence, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and House Republican leaders.

"I don't think it will (happen), but I am prepared."

The impasse, heading into its third week, has closed parts of nine federal agencies, including the Interior Department and the Internal Revenue Service, and left 800,000 federal employees either on a forced leave of absence or working without pay.

Mr Trump expressed little concern for their plight, telling reporters last Friday afternoon that when he hosted members of the Border Patrol Union - his political

PROUD OF DECISION

I'm very proud of doing what I'm doing. I don't call it a shutdown. I call it 'doing what you have to do for the benefit and for the safety of our country'.

U.S. PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

allies - last Thursday at the White House, they told him not to worry about them, and that he was doing "a great thing for our country".

Ever the real estate developer, Mr Trump offered his vision for what the wall would look like, saying it would be either solid concrete or solid steel, though "steel" is actually more expensive".

The President boasted that its construction would be a boon for American industry.

As for invoking his emergency powers to build it, Mr Trump said: "I may do it." He added: "But we can call a national emergency and build it very quickly. And it's another way of doing it. But if we can do it through a negotiated process, we're giving that a shot."

But if Mr Trump is showing no signs of backing down, the pressure may be building on Republicans in Congress.

Two Republican senators have said they want votes to reopen the government, and more than a half-dozen House Republicans joined Democrats last Thursday night to do just that.

The President was asked if he was still "proud to own" the shutdown - a reference to a comment he made last month during a televised Oval Office meeting, when he said he would be proud to shut down the government over border security.

"I'm very proud of doing what I'm doing," he replied. "I don't call it a shutdown. I call it 'doing what you have to do for the benefit and for the safety of our country'."

No matter what happens, the government will remain partly shuttered at least through Tuesday because both Houses of Congress are adjourned until then. **NYTIMES**

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS **A10**

Singaporean scores on ice



Singapore speed skater Cheyenne Goh won the women's 500m and 1,500m events at the SEA Open Short Track Trophy at the Rink@JCube yesterday. The 19-year-old, who was the Republic's first Winter Olympian in Pyeongchang, South Korea, last year, also beat the SEA Games qualifying mark for the 500m with her 48.691sec. She will compete in the 1,000m today. Also, teammate Lucas Ng won a gold (men's 500m) and a silver (1,500m). But he missed SEA Games qualification in the 500m, as his 45.845sec effort fell short of the 45.778sec mark. **ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG SEE SPORT A25**

German agency aware of cyber intrusion in Dec

German cyber-security sleuths said yesterday they were aware of suspicious activity targeting a lawmaker's private e-mail and social media accounts last month, but could not make the connection with a mass intrusion targeting hundreds of politicians until the legislators' data was published on a Twitter account.

The Federal Office for Information Security has been lambasted for

not contacting the police about the leak till the breach became public knowledge last Friday, with the publication of the personal data of nearly 1,000 lawmakers and other prominent Germans on the Internet.

All those attacked had a history of criticising the far right, with only politicians from the far right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, spared.

SEE WORLD **A20**



Evacuees returned home to find their belongings soaked by flash floods. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE



Residents face the huge task of clearing the debris left by the giant waves. PHOTO: REUTERS



The storm toppled trees and electricity poles. Power supply has been restored but clean water remains scarce. PHOTO: REUTERS



RESIDENTS HIT HARD

All 6,000 households living in our 7.35 sq km were hit. What happened to them is devastating as the majority are low-income earners.

“

PAK PHANANG MAYOR PHICHEAT KLASUKHON, on Pak Phanang, which appeared to be the most devastated area.

CONCERN REMAIN

Since it has been raining heavily for days, what we are concerned about is landslides. We are on high alert in 42 areas, and getting people there ready to evacuate.

“

KRABI PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR KITIBODEE PRAVITRA, on evacuees being able to return home within hours.

Pabuk made landfall last Friday afternoon in Nakhon Si Thammarat's Pak Phanang district by the Gulf of Thailand, with 75kmh winds tearing off rooftops. PHOTO: REUTERS

Thais pick up pieces as Pabuk passes

Storm that hit south downgraded to tropical depression but Met warns of torrential rain

Tan Hui Yee
Indochina Bureau Chief
In Bangkok

Residents in southern Thailand began picking up the pieces in their inundated homes yesterday as Tropical Storm Pabuk weakened and swirled across the mainland into the Andaman Sea.

Airlines resumed operations, and extra flights were introduced to clear the backlog of tourists delayed by the storm.

While ferry services revved up to extract travellers from resort islands, including Koh Phi Phi, officials continued to warn against launching smaller vessels in the sea amid threats of encountering waves as high as 5m in both the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea.

Meanwhile, rescuers worked to clear fallen electricity poles, uprooted trees, and other debris left by the giant waves. Evacuees returned home to find belongings soaked by flash floods.

Pabuk made landfall last Friday af-

ternoon in Nakhon Si Thammarat's Pak Phanang district by the Gulf of Thailand, with 75kmh winds tearing off rooftops.

It then weakened while travelling to the western side of the Thai peninsula, the centre swirling yesterday morning over Leuk Bay in Krabi province with winds that went up to 55kmh.

By 9am, the storm had moved into the Andaman Sea.

In its midday report yesterday, Thailand's Meteorological Department downgraded Pabuk to a tropical depression.

But it warned of torrential rain over large parts of the south. "People should beware of the severe conditions that cause possible forest run-offs, flash floods and lowlands under water," it said in a statement.

Pak Phanang, known for its fishing and bird's nest farming, appeared to be the most devastated area.

"All 6,000 households living in our 7.35sq km were hit," Pak Phanang Mayor Phicheat Klasukhon told The Sunday Times over



Tourists disembarking at Surat Thani airport after tour operators were forced to suspend boats to tourist islands due to Tropical Storm Pabuk. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

tions but they returned home hours later.

"But since it has been raining heavily for days, what we are concerned about is landslides," he told The Sunday Times. "We are on high alert in 42 areas, and getting people there ready to evacuate."

The popular holiday islands off Krabi, such as Koh Phi Phi, will remain closed until conditions are stable, he said. Swimming is banned in its waters.

On another resort island, Koh Samui, tourists thronged the airport as Bangkok Airways put on extra flights to help passengers affected by flight cancellations last Friday.

Some 300 locals and tourists staying in beach hotels who were evacuated to a shelter last Friday returned to their hotels that night, said Samui district chief Kittipop Roddon.

Much of the damage involved toppled coconut trees and electricity poles, he said. "Only some areas were hit by a blackout on Friday night but things will go back to normal soon," he said.

"After a few gloomy days, the sun started shining today."

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the phone. "What happened to them is devastating as the majority are low-income earners."

Some of the thousands of evacuees are returning home to find damaged roofs, after being housed in shelters for two days.

Roof tiles were out of stock, the Mayor said, and about 30 homes have completely collapsed.

Power supply was restored Friday night but clean water remains scarce, added Mr Phicheat.

"We really need water supply to

come back as we need to clean all the areas to prevent any epidemic."

Over in Krabi, the damage was lighter. Provincial Governor Kitibodee Pravitra said that about 50 people evacuated from Leuk Bay last Friday night amid stormy condi-

Five teenage girls die in Polish escape-room fire

Escape rooms are popular around the world and offer a live-action experience in which players are locked in a room with one hour to figure out a series of clues and riddles to get out.

WARSAW • Five teenage girls died and one man was seriously injured last Friday after a fire broke out in a room where they were playing an escape game, in the northern Polish city of Koszalin, officials said.

"The victims of this tragedy are 15-year-old children, girls celebrating a birthday," Interior Minister Joachim Brudzinski told broadcaster TVN24.

Fire spokesman Tomasz Kubiat could only confirm that the dead were female, telling Agence

France-Presse that "one man with severe burns was taken to an intensive care unit".

Local police press officer Monika Kosiec told reporters that the injured man is thought to be 25 years old.

Police and fire officials said they did not know yet what started the blaze, which was reported in the early evening.

Mr Brudzinski directed the state fire service to carry out fire security controls in every escape room across the country. There are more than 1,000 such facilities in Poland.

Escape rooms are popular around the world and offer a live-action experience in which players are locked in a room with one hour to figure out a series of clues and riddles to get out.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Power bank explodes on Royal Brunei flight; passengers unharmed

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN • All passengers and crew of a Royal Brunei Airlines flight where a power bank reportedly exploded were unharmed, the Brunei national carrier said in a statement.

The incident became public after a Facebook user showed videos and images of the incident that were quickly shared by others.

The videos and images showed a smoky main cabin and passengers covering their noses and faces as flight attendants calmly extin-

guished what was believed to be a small fire.

The airline, in a statement on its website, referred to what occurred on board as "a power bank incident".

In his post, Facebook user Francis Ngu Hua praised the crewmembers for their professionalism and composure in handling the situation.

Flight BI636 was flying from Hong Kong to Bandar Seri Begawan, and landed at its destination

safely as scheduled last Thursday.

"Our cabin crew are trained to follow standard operating procedures to handle such incidents professionally and to ensure the safety of our guests at all times. We carry the recommended safety equipment on board at all times," said the airline in a statement that day.

The airline highlighted the importance of the safety of its guests.

It issued a reminder for passengers to observe the Guide to Dangerous Goods for checked-in or carry-on baggage in accordance with the International Air Transport Association's Dangerous Goods Regulations.

Power banks are allowed as carry-on luggage.

It was not clear if the incident was caused by a passenger charging or using the power bank.

BORNEO BULLETIN/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



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WHAT'S GONE WRONG?

A spate of delays over a month due to aircraft glitches has travellers upset with how the airline handled the situations and customer care

PHOTO: SCOOT

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Aviation Correspondent

After being hit by five major flight disruptions in just over a month, travellers are asking if there is something seriously wrong with Scoot, the budget arm of Singapore Airlines (SIA).

The incidents which occurred between Nov 25 and Jan 1, all due to different technical problems with the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, caused delays ranging from about seven hours to up to 56 hours for about 2,000 passengers.

Experts say operational hiccups are inevitable and can be caused by many factors, including ground handling and air traffic issues. In Scoot's case, the problems were due to aircraft glitches.

"Even the best airlines in the world cannot avoid experiencing technical glitches," said Mr Abbas Ismail, course manager for aviation management and services at Temasek Polytechnic. While some glitches can be resolved quickly – for example, a problem with the in-flight entertainment system – others like engine issues require more time to fix, he added.

Airlines and experts are clear that when there is a problem, safety must never be compromised, even if it means grounding the plane.

Travellers understand this but say the recent spate of incidents involving Scoot flights is unprecedented and worrying.

Many of those affected were also upset that it took so long for the airline to activate the necessary contingency plans, including mounting rescue flights, and felt that Scoot could have done a much better job taking care of their needs while they were stranded.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) has looked into the technical issues encountered by Scoot and confirmed that the air-

line has conducted its operations, including aircraft maintenance and management of technical issues, in compliance with CAAS' safety regulations and procedures prescribed by the aircraft manufacturer, said Mr Alan Foo, director (flight standards) at CAAS.

There are many factors that contribute to the disruptions, starting with the troubled B-787.

WAKING UP TO DREAMLINER

With new and lightweight composite materials that make up half of its primary structure, including the fuselage and wing, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner started flying commercially in 2011, promising a new era of profitable flying for airlines.

Powered by more fuel-efficient engines, its American maker said the aircraft would cut fuel use and carbon emissions by about 20 to 30 per cent compared with the older planes it would replace.

But a series of engine glitches that have hit Rolls-Royce's Trent 1000, which powers Scoot's 18 B-787s, have led to costly delays and repair costs.

The turbine blades inside the Trent 1000 "package C" engines are corroding and cracking at a quicker than expected rate.

In April last year, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the United States gave notice that B-787s fitted with the Rolls-Royce engine cannot operate more than 140 minutes from an airport they can divert to in an emergency; down from 330 minutes before.

This was after the European Aviation Safety Agency ordered additional maintenance checks on the Trent 1000.

There are more than 750 B-787s worldwide, fitted with either Rolls-Royce or GV Aviation engines.

Scoot has at least one plane grounded at any one time. Rolls-Royce has promised the problem will be fixed but experts caution

this could take many months.

THE COST OF FLYING LOW-COST

Budget airlines operate with tight schedules and limited resources, including aircraft spare parts, to keep costs down and fares low.

Unlike full-service airlines that have commercial tie-ups like interline and codeshare arrangements with other carriers, many budget airlines prefer to go solo or have few such partnerships, to avoid complicated operations that may add to operating costs.

The downside is that when a problem crops up, recovery takes time. For example, transferring passengers to flights operated by other airlines is not so easy for budget airlines.

Mr Abbas said: "With leaner fleets and a high aircraft utilisation rate to maximise resources, and keep fixed and operating costs low, a slight delay here and there can lead to longer delays for flights later in the day due to the knock-on effect."

When a glitch occurs, the preferred option is always to fix the problem locally, said Professor Guido Gianasso, associate dean (corporate engagement and relations) at Nanyang Technological University's Nanyang Business School.

"Sometimes, a new piece of material needs to be ordered and shipped to the destination. This takes time.

"If the problem cannot be fixed reasonably quickly, say around six hours, the airline transfers all stranded passengers to its next flight, or to another airline's flight.

"The last resort is sending another plane to take stranded passengers home. As you can imagine, with a small fleet and stretched capacity, this is expensive and complex."

How fast an airline can recover from a glitch also depends on where the problem occurs and on which route, experts say.

In the case of the Dec 18 Athens-Singapore flight which caused a 56-hour delay for passengers, the distance and lack of alternative flights to rescue stranded passengers posed major challenges.

Prof Gianasso said: "Flying Scoot on short-haul routes with frequent connections is a pretty safe choice. The risk is a delay of a few hours. But long-haul is a completely different story."

From a purely financial perspective, it is cheaper and easier for Scoot to keep a group of 200 passengers on the ground for a couple of days than organising a special flight to rescue them.

"Passengers need to understand how the business model works," he stressed.

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With long flights, there is also a

BUDGET CARRIERS' WOES

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PROFESSOR GUIDO GIANASSO, associate dean (corporate engagement and relations) at Nanyang Technological University's Nanyang Business School.

high risk that the regulatory time limits for airline crew can run out. If this happens, another set of crew has to be activated.

Before a relief flight can be mounted, the airline also needs to seek regulatory approvals from various countries for overflight requirements, which require time.

"You get what you pay for," Mr Abbas put bluntly.

"There is a reason why we have Scoot and SIA, and why the fares charged by them are different. If you want an airline that will take care of everything for you when something goes wrong, fly SIA."

"The higher fares are like an insurance when something goes wrong. If you prefer to save some money and take care of yourself when things go wrong, fly Scoot or other low-cost carriers," he said.

When flying on budget carriers, travellers can also help themselves by being better prepared, said Singapore Management University Assistant Professor Terence Fan, who specialises in transport.

"As far as possible, schedule some buffer between the flight and their next activity, for example, going back to work or moving to another connecting flight. They should also buy travel insurance for compensation if extreme delays occur," he cautioned.

SCOOT PROMISES TO DO BETTER

In a letter to The Straits Times Forum page, Ms Stacy Wong, one of those affected by the Taipei-Singapore delay on Dec 30, said "communication and compassion are key when there are extensive flight delays".

Airlines should always provide frequent and clear updates to all passengers, she said.

"In Taipei, Scoot did not adhere to briefing timings, leading passengers to crowd around ground staff for information."

"On both days (when passengers

were stranded in Taipei), passengers had to ask staff questions individually and circulate information among themselves," she noted.

Ms Han Xiaoming, who was also affected by the delays, said: "While we all appreciate that low air fares come with no frills, the economics of running Scoot's operations seems perverse."

The 27-year-old accountant said the airline may have tilted the balance in favour of running tight schedules with little or no margin for error because the costs of inconveniencing passengers, which could include a \$75 voucher, are too small.

Aviation analysts and other experts pointed out that unlike in Europe where there are regulations and strong consumer laws, budget airlines that operate in other regions are not obliged to offer any compensation when flights are disrupted.

When accommodation and meals are provided, airlines do it out of goodwill.

Still, it is not in Scoot's interests, or that of its parent SIA, to upset its customers.

Mr Shukor Yusof, aviation analyst at Endau Analytics, warned: "While Scoot has been the poster boy for the SIA group (in terms of revenue) such incidents, if not explained fully or worsen, will quickly put passengers off and the group will suffer."

A Scoot spokesman acknowledged the shortcomings in customer handling during the recent delays.

"We apologise and will review to improve."

"With regard to our speediness in the activation of extra flights, when the technical issue resolution requires more time, we have been and will continue to utilise all resources available to us, including chartering aircraft from SIA for that purpose," she said.

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Recent flight delays

NOV 25, 2018

A Singapore-Bangkok flight was delayed at Changi Airport for nearly seven hours due to a technical issue with the aircraft.

Travellers on Flight TR616 were eventually transferred to a replacement aircraft but the return Bangkok-Singapore flight was also delayed for about six hours.

NOV 26

Passengers on a Scoot flight bound for Singapore waited for almost 30 hours in Tokyo and Bangkok due to an aircraft technical issue.

Flight TR869 had departed Tokyo for Singapore with a planned stopover in Bangkok but a technical issue forced the plane to return to Narita International Airport.

DEC 18

Scoot Flight TR713 from Athens



Left: More than 300 passengers on a Singapore-bound Scoot flight on Dec 18 remained stranded in Greece after a technical fault led to multiple delays. Right: Passengers on Flight TR899 were supposed to depart Taipei on Dec 30 at 4.10pm, but arrived in Singapore only on Jan 1 due to an electrical component defect. PHOTOS: ALI MCMANUS/TWITTER, LIANIE WANBAO READER



with 321 passengers on board was delayed at least three times and eventually arrived in Singapore about 56 hours behind time.

Passengers were made to board and disembark from flights on

three separate occasions over two days.

DEC 30

More than 350 passengers on Scoot Flight TR899 were stuck in Taipei

on New Year's Eve.

The flight was supposed to depart at 4.10pm but an electrical component defect grounded the plane. Replacement parts had to be flown in from Singapore.

The flight was rescheduled for the next morning but the technical issue persisted and it took off only later in the night.

The flight landed in Singapore on New Year's Day after a delay of

almost 30 hours.

JAN 1, 2019

Scoot Flight TR101 from Guangzhou to Singapore was delayed by more than 13 hours.

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'Reverse engineering' model, involving negotiations with tenants on food prices and rental, a key factor

Yuen Sin

Auditor Penny Chua, 27, says it is often hard to find places selling meals for less than \$6 around her office in Marina One in the Central Business District (CBD).

"My colleagues always pay around \$10 for sushi at Standing Sushi or for salads at The Daily Cut, but I'm not willing to spend so much on a regular basis."

She is thus glad for the NTUC Foodfare foodcourt at Marina Bay Financial Centre (MBFC) across from her office, which she said offers mixed rice at around \$3.50, or soup at around \$5.



The NTUC Foodfare foodcourt at Kho Teck Puat Hospital. The chain's foodcourts feature value meals and healthier options. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

NTUC Foodfare
Affordable, healthy meals in snazzy set-ups

But if some prospective tenants of the foodcourt had their way when it opened in 2012, workers in the area might not have been able to enjoy such prices.

The tenants wanted to sell dishes at higher prices, given the NTUC's lack of price competition, NTUC Foodfare chief executive officer Perry Ong told The Sunday Times.

They pointed out that this would mean they would pay higher rents to NTUC Foodfare, too, as it was industry practice for foodcourt tenants to pay a percentage of their monthly gross turnover of their monthly rental. Most operators charge a gross turnover of about 23 to 25 per cent for food stall tenants, though NTUC Foodfare charges 23 per cent or less.

But Mr Ong said no. NTUC Foodfare told the prospective tenants: "Look, if you don't subscribe to the DNA of Foodfare, we will not be able to take you on."

Now, the foodcourt sells man at \$4.30, mixed rice dishes from \$3.20, and udon from \$3.80. With NTUC Foodfare's holding entity NTUC Enterprise set to become the king of foodcourts here - it will have the most foodcourts when its acquisition of Kopitiam completed by the second quarter of this year - some have questioned if it will continue to keep prices low.

NTUC Enterprise will have 70 foodcourts, followed by Koufu, Food Republic and Food Junction. "Now that they have control over the pricing at more foodcourts, will they monopolise the market? I hope they will remember the workers and continue to

give good discounts," said bank assistant manager Hasnud Osman, 60, a regular at NTUC Foodfare at Clifford Centre.

But in an interview last week at the NTUC Foodfare headquarters in Senoko Way, Mr Ong, 46, gave the assurance that it will continue to keep prices low, citing how its foodcourt in the gleaming towers of MBFC serves up daily fare at prices palatable to most.

He said: "Even if it meant that (tenants) will pay us less rent, we wanted them to set more affordable prices, because not everyone working at MBFC is an investment banker. You still have clerical and administrative staff working there."

In September, NTUC Enterprise announced its intention to acquire food centre operator Kopitiam Investment and its subsidiaries, which spans 80 outlets comprising 56 foodcourts, 21 coffee shops and three hawker centres, as well as two central kitchens.

Consumers eligible for concessions, such as the low-income or senior citizens, can get meals at subsidised prices of \$1.50 to \$2.50 from 44 Rice Garden stalls in hawker centres and coffee shops.

Over five million meals were sold by these stalls last year, mostly at subsidised prices.

REVERSE ENGINEERING

NTUC Foodfare is able to keep prices affordable without compromising on its tenants' ability to earn profit due to its unique "reverse engineering" model of setting food prices and rentals, said Mr Ong.

Before tenants lease a stall, NTUC Foodfare will first discuss how to price food items, and both parties will decide on a price range that is affordable for consumers.

It ensures that most foodcourt stalls sell a basic food dish at between \$3.50 and \$4.50, though they are also allowed to sell better-quality meals at higher prices.

For instance, you can get a udon dish with fried silverfish and seaweed at MBFC for \$3.80, while a tonkatsu chicken udon costs \$7.80.

NTUC Foodfare also conducts

AFFORDABILITY IS KEY

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staff working there.

“

NTUC FOODFARE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER PERRY ONG on its foodcourt at Marina Bay Financial Centre.



Prices at foodcourts in the central area

Foodcourt	Cost of item (\$)		
	Kopi-O (hot)	Chicken rice (roasted/steamed)	Ban mian
Kopitiam (Plaza Singapura)	1.50	4.50	4.80
Koufu (Singapore Management University)	0.90	N/A	4.50
Food Republic (Bras Basah Road)	1.40	4.80	5.30
Food Junction (Raffles City)	1.40	4.90	5.30
NTUC Foodfare (Clifford Centre)	1	4.10	4

ST PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI, DIOS VINCOY JR., KENNETH GOH SUNDAY TIMES GRAPHICS

NTUC Foodfare chief executive Perry Ong says that for the past five to six years, Foodfare has not raised rents for many of its foodcourt tenants. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

The NTUC Foodfare foodcourt at Kho Teck Puat Hospital. The chain's foodcourts feature value meals and healthier options. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI



Koufu's foodcourts serve their purpose of feeding the masses and can be found in places like malls and tertiary institutions. PHOTO: KOUFU GROUP

Koufu

No frills, but dishes keep diners coming back



A Food Republic foodcourt at Shaw House. The chain's foodcourts boast a good mix of hawker and restaurant fare. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

Food Republic

Friendly staff add to vibrant, buzzing vibe

price surveys in the area to set prices at its foodcourts.

Based on the food prices agreed on and other estimated costs, the tenants and NTUC Foodfare will work backwards to decide how much rent is sustainable, and both sides will negotiate again before settling on a fee. Thus, stalls may pay different monthly rents.

There have been "many times" when the rent proposed by NTUC Foodfare was lowered after negotiations with stallholders, said Mr Ong.

Though he cannot disclose the rents due to commercial sensitivities, he said these generally cover the rent set by the landlord, as well as operating expenses, such as renovation and management fees.

The group had been able to offer lower food prices at MBFC partly because it negotiated an affordable rent and a longer lease.

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he said he pays a basic rent of about \$8,000 a month.

Marketing professor Ang Swee Hoon of the National University of Singapore said NTUC Foodfare's "reverse engineering" model motivates stallholders to focus more on multiple stalls in its foodcourts, as an incentive for them to generate economies of scale. They can then pass on cost savings to consumers.

A Foodfare stallholder, who declined to be named, said it can be "a little restrictive" having to keep the prices of dishes below a certain range.

"But as the dishes are cheaper, more customers come and buy. It has been so far, so good for us in terms of profits."

yuensin@sph.com.sg



The Food Junction foodcourt at Nex. The chain takes some pains to make its foodcourts look chic and contemporary. PHOTO: FOOD JUNCTION

Food Junction

Decor distinctive but not the stalls



The Cantine foodcourt at Paya Lebar Square. Cantine foodcourts are the best-looking among the halal foodcourts run by Kopitiam. PHOTO: KOPITIAM

Bagus, Cantine and Sedap

Canny stall selection with wide array of food

Tan Hsueh Yun

Food Editor

Opening in 2019: Food Junction's flagship outlet will be in Jewel Changi, with 16 stalls and two mini restaurants.

Founded: 1993

Number of foodcourts: 12

Total number of stalls: 199 as of December 2018



RedRing Treasures' chicken cutlet and noodle set comes drenched in house-made spicy sauce. ST PHOTO: EUNICE QUEK

The array of meats - soya sauce chicken, roast duck, roast pork, even a suckling pig - displayed at the stall is enough to make me hungry. It's a good mix of hawker and restaurant fare, and heritage stalls display their stories as well - an important factor to standing out from other foodcourts.

There are a variety of cuisines and stallholders, the selection of stalls is canny. There is a wide array of food - Korean, Japanese, Italian with a local spin, mala xiang guo and vegan, among others. All the local favourites, such as ban mian, chicken rice, nasi padang and carot cake, are represented.

Like other Kopitiam foodcourts, the selection of stalls is canny. There is a wide array of food - Korean, Japanese, Italian with a local spin, mala xiang guo and vegan, among others. All the local favourites, such as ban mian, chicken rice, nasi padang and carot cake, are represented.

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US workers feel the pain as partial govt shutdown continues

800,000 affected, and many who continue to work not sure they will be paid eventually

Nirmal Ghosh
US Bureau Chief
In Washington

IN STATE OF PANIC
I'm losing pay every day that this government shutdown continues. I've taken on extra shifts at my second job but it isn't going to pay rent and all my bills. Being a single mum, I'm in panic mode right now.

MS JULIE BURR, a contractual government worker who has started a GoFundMe page.

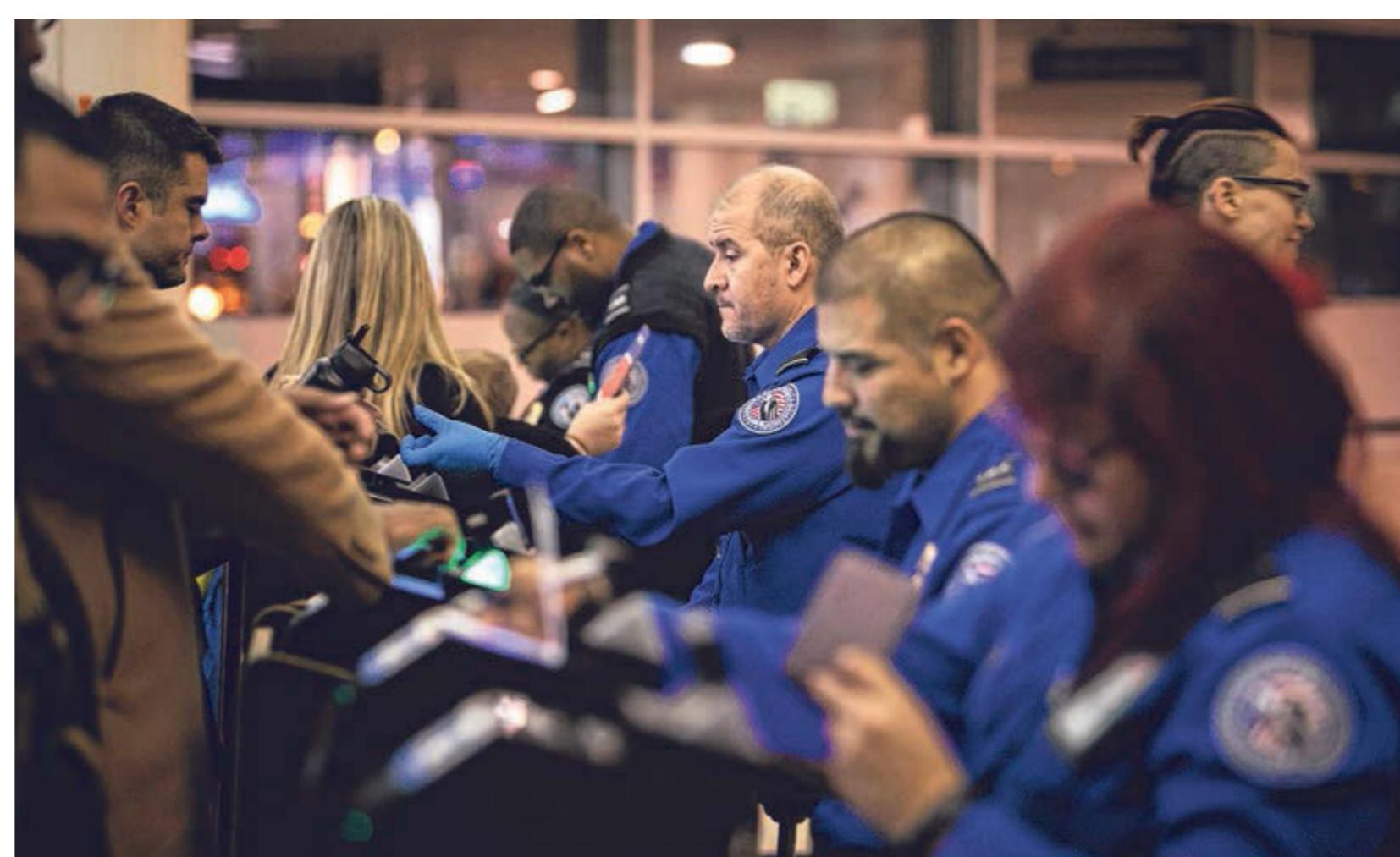
From hotel and transport operators in Yellowstone National Park, to farmers in North Carolina waiting for market information and hurricane relief cheques, to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) employee in Washington who makes only US\$40,000 (S\$54,400) a year and is now working without pay, the United States federal government's partial shutdown is beginning to pinch.

One contractual government worker, Ms Julie Burr, has started a GoFundMe page, saying: "I'm losing pay every day that this government shutdown continues. I've taken on extra shifts at my second job but it isn't going to pay rent and all my bills."

"Being a single mum, I'm in panic mode right now."

In a week, the appeal had raised over US\$3,000, with many writing in and sharing similar predicaments.

The shutdown has affected an array of federal institutions and ser-



US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) agents continuing their work at Chicago's Midway International Airport on Dec 22, despite the partial government shutdown, which has affected an array of American federal institutions and services. PHOTO: NYTIMES

vices, and some 800,000 federal employees, for many of whom getting back pay eventually for days worked without pay is not certain.

In a Jan 2 e-mail, the American Federation of Government Employees quoted its national president J. David Cox as saying: "Our members take home an average of around US\$500 each week. Any interruption in their pay has a devastating impact on them, their families, and their communities."

Negotiations over the weekend held out some hope that there may be a compromise over funding President Donald Trump's border wall, and reopening the parts of the government that are affected.

Both sides seem boxed into their positions. President Trump says he wants over US\$5 billion for the wall or else the shutdown continues, and the Democratic Party is adamant that the wall is not necessary and in fact "immoral".

Public opinion has been mixed. In polls around Christmas, just af-

ter the shutdown took effect, most appeared to blame the President. But later polls seem to indicate a shift to blaming Democrats.

"In the minds of most Americans, Trump was largely to blame. But public opinion may be changing," the Five Thirty Eight website said on Friday in an analysis of available polls.

The political ramifications are difficult to predict. In an analysis of polls after previous shutdowns in 1995 to 1996, and 2013, Five Thirty Eight found that other news events quickly overtook them.

"By just one month after the 1995-1996 and 2013 shutdowns, any changes in the polls that had occurred during the shutdowns had vanished," the website said. "After the January 2018 shutdown, Trump's approval rating recovered in two weeks... Shutdowns just don't seem to have a long-term effect on public opinion."

The economic impact is also currently uncertain.

An official analysis of the 16-day shutdown in October 2016 concluded that it dented real gross domestic product growth by between 0.2 and 0.6 per cent. Separately Moody's Analytics estimated the loss at US\$23 billion.

But Moody's Analytics' chief economist Mark Zandi told the Associated Press on Thursday the "shutdown is coming on top of lots of other problems - the trade war, the slump in the stock market, Brexit, Trump's political problems".

"By itself, the shutdown may not be a big deal, but if you add it up and mix it with all this other noxious stuff, it could become a real problem."

"If the trade war isn't settled soon, that will be a real problem, and if it conflates with a prolonged shutdown, that could be fodder for a recession," he said.

nirmal@sph.com.sg

Recent US federal government shutdowns

JANUARY 2018: 4 DAYS

President: Donald Trump
Senate: Republicans (51-47), Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
House: Republicans (241-194), Speaker Paul Ryan.

On Jan 19, Senate Democrats insisted that the issue of immigration, specifically the funding of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) - which allowed children of illegal immigrants to stay in the US - be addressed in the budget. Republicans refused, saying the deadline for DACA and immigration was only in March. Eventually a stopgap budget was passed.

Who won: Republicans backed down.

FEBRUARY 2018: 9 HOURS

A funding gap occurred for nine hours on Feb 9, as the two parties wrangled again over funding for the military and raising the debt ceiling. But overnight, the Senate passed the Bill.

Who won: Opinion divided, but some see the Democrats as having lost.

OCTOBER 2013: 16 DAYS

President: Barack Obama
Senate: Democrats (54-46), Majority Leader Harry Reid
House: Republicans (232-200), Speaker John Boehner

The October 2013 shutdown lasted 16 days, affecting approximately 800,000 federal employees who were placed on furlough, with another 1.3 million required to report to work without known payment dates. The fight was over the Affordable Care Act commonly known as Obamacare. The Republican Party wanted to delay Obamacare or prevent it from receiving funds.

Who won: Democrats

Sources: Vox, Wikipedia



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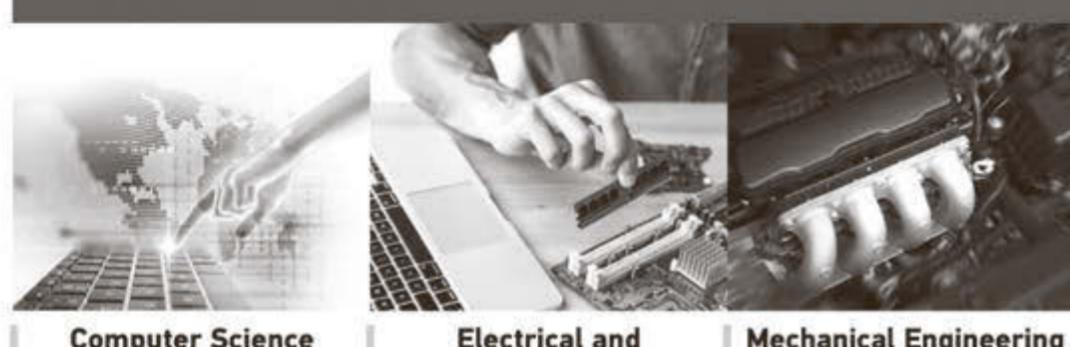
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To succeed, S'pore needs citizens with values: PM

Parents urged to back changes to education system so schools can equip students with skills for jobs and develop character



LIFELONG LEARNING

We want to inculcate in young Singaporeans the passion to 'learn for life' so that they are prepared for the future economy.

“

PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEH LOONG

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong congratulating Edusave Award recipient Lim Zhe Wei from Teck Ghee Primary School, who is accompanied by his mother Feng Biao Mei and sister Lim Zhi Yi. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Fabian Koh

Calling on parents to support the recent changes to the education system, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong yesterday said schools aim not only to equip students with the knowledge and skills to earn a living, but also to develop character and help them acquire the values to be a good person and citizen.

For the Republic to succeed, Singaporeans must not only be well-educated citizens and well-trained workers, they also need to have "intangible but essential values".

Addressing 242 Ministry of Education (MOE) Edusave Award recipients and their families at Townsville Primary School, PM Lee said: "We must also understand the world around us, feel a sense of nationhood and community that we are one people, and have the resilience and determination to overcome adversity, defend ourselves, prosper and thrive in the world."

"That depends not just on what knowledge you have picked up in school – language, science and mathematics, economics and history – but also the intangible but essential values – caring for your classmates and fellow citizens, being willing to contribute to the common good, taking pride in our country, and standing up for it."

Over this weekend, more than 1,100 students living in Teck Ghee will be receiving Teck Ghee Citizens Consultative Committee Bursary Awards and MOE Edusave Awards.

The bursary awards are given to those from lower-income families, while MOE Edusave Awards – ranging from \$100 to \$500 – recognise the ones who have excelled in academic and non-academic aspects.

PM Lee, who is also an MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC, said recent changes to the education system will make learning more meaningful for students.

These include reducing the emphasis on academic results, dedicating more curriculum time to deeper learning, and helping students draw the link between textbook content and the real world.

"We want to inculcate in young Singaporeans the passion to 'learn for life' so that they are prepared for the future economy," he added.

He called on parents to understand what the Government is trying to achieve, and support it in its objective.

Addressing the students, PM Lee said: "Take advantage of the opportunities to learn as much as you can, both in knowledge and also values from your teachers and friends."

Primary 4 pupil Lim Zhe Wei from Teck Ghee Primary School, who was cited in PM Lee's speech, was the recipient of an MOE Edusave Award.

The first-time Edusave Character Award winner had lost his father in October 2017 due to complications from a bacterial infection.

"He had initially complained of being cold, and started having bouts of vomiting. Before we knew it, he was hospitalised in the intensive care unit for a month, and passed away," said Zhe Wei's mother Feng Biao Mei, 46, a factory worker, in Mandarin.

Her nine-year-old son, whose elder sister is in Primary 5 in the same school, overcame the personal tragedy to excel in his studies, and even took up the responsibility of being class monitor in the second half of last year.

"My teacher picked me to be class monitor. At first I said no, but he encouraged me and told me to try," said Zhe Wei.

"I had to take care of the class, tell my classmates to read their books when the teacher was not around, and help the teacher carry books from the classroom."

He added: "I felt good I could help other people."

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Blue Jaz, a three-level live-music nightspot in Bali Lane, is packed on most Friday nights and a wide range of genres is played, ranging from experimental jazz to pop and rock, or even a mix of them. The venue cannot hold live performances from Feb 1, but can continue to operate as an eatery

ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



Musicians feel blue over end to live acts at Blu Jaz

Many feel that the performances there changed how people appreciated music

Anjali Raguraman

Following the announcement that live entertainment venue and nightspot Blu Jaz Cafe had lost its appeal to keep its entertainment licence last Wednesday, musicians told The Sunday Times this would leave a "gaping hole" in the entertainment scene in Singapore.

The venue had been served notice on Oct 8 last year as it had exceeded the limit for demerit points because of previous offences, including for severe overcrowding on two occasions, which

the police said posed major safety risks.

With the rejection of an appeal by the Public Entertainment Appeal Board – an independent board with representatives from the legal, social, business and health sectors – the venue can no longer hold live performances from Feb 1, but can continue to operate as an eatery.

However, the diverse performances that took place regularly in the three-storey venue in Kampong Glam were the life blood of the 13-year-old nightspot.

"Blu Jaz singlehandedly changed how people appreciate music, both

for musicians and patrons," said home-grown jazz powerhouse Alemany Fernandez, 40, who has been performing there since it opened.

She recalls having come across genres ranging from experimental jazz to pop and rock, or even a mix of them, on any given night.

She feels Blu Jaz is an institution that has taken time to build up and one that will be hard to replace. "There's going to be a big gaping hole in the music scene."

When The Sunday Times visited Blu Jaz on Friday night, it was packed, as it is most Friday nights, with a band called The Soulfonics playing on level one.

Mr Loga Raj, 30, a bartender in the Kampong Glam area, was there after work and said: "The jazz scene here is great."

As for the licence being cancelled, he added: "It's a pity, but they brought it upon themselves."

The police said in a statement that in arriving at its decision, the appeal board weighed factors such as Blu Jaz Cafe's "contribution to the arts and music scene in Singapore, its track record, its remedial actions and the severity of the overcrowding offences that resulted in serious public safety concerns".

Blu Jaz Cafe had accumulated 24 demerit points within a 24-month period, which led to the cancellation of its licence on Oct 8.

On April 28, the police found that there were more than 150 people on the second floor of the three-storey venue, even though the venue has a maximum approved occupancy load of only 30

persons on that floor.

The live-music venue in Bali Lane was informed of the infringement, but when a check was done the following week, there were close to 200 people on the second floor, according to the police.

When the cancellation was first announced in October last year, performers and the Kampong Glam community rallied around to sign a petition put up by Blu Jaz to garner support for the appeal.

Asked last October what would happen if the appeal failed, Blu Jaz Cafe's director Aileen Tan, 56, had said: "The rent here is astronomical. Without entertainment, we will not be able to sustain it and will eventually have to close shop."

When contacted by The Sunday Times, she declined to comment.

Singer Joanna Dong, 37, was one of the performers who rallied around Blu Jaz Cafe when it set up a petition to garner support for the appeal.

BIG INFLUENCE

Blu Jaz
singlehandedly changed how people appreciate music, both for musicians and patrons... There's going to be a big gaping hole in the music scene.

“

HOME-GROWN JAZZ POWERHOUSE Alemany Fernandez, 40, who has been performing at the venue since it opened.

TOO BAD

The jazz scene here is great... It's a pity, but they brought it upon themselves.

“

BARTENDER LOGA RAJ, who is a Blu Jaz customer, on the licence being cancelled.

TAKING A STAND FOR FUTURE

It may appear as if our appeals had no impact on the outcome – but I believe that having propelled the issue to national consciousness is significant in the long-run conversations regarding our live music scene.

“

SINGER JOANNA DONG, 37, in a Facebook post. She was one of the performers who rallied around Blu Jaz Cafe when it set up a petition to garner support for the appeal.

Chronicle of movers and shakers in Teochew community

Melody Zaccheus
Heritage and Community Correspondent

An artist whose portrait of Singapore's first president is immortalised on currency notes, and a centenarian who still goes to work daily are among 80 people highlighted in a new book.

The English version of The Story of Singapore Teochews, to be launched on Saturday, highlights the movers and shakers in Singapore's 700,000-strong Teochew community – the largest Chinese dialect group here after the Hokkiens.

It chronicles their contributions to the Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan and Singapore as the clan association celebrates its 90th anniversary and as the nation commemorates its bicentennial this year.

Artist Chua Mia Tee, 87, is behind the portrait of Singapore's first president, Mr Yusof Ishak.

The prolific portraitist, who dropped out of Chung Cheng High School without his father's consent and studied at the Nanyang School of Art instead, has painted Singaporean luminaries – including six presidents – throughout his career.

The Cultural Medallion winner, whose work – among other things –

captures Singapore's nation-building years, is known as one of the country's foremost realist painters.

The book also delves deeper into the backstory of centenarian and entrepreneur Eng Liat Kiang, detailing his journey to Singapore in a cargo ship in 1936, and how he started his work life by plucking chickens, running a fruit shop and roadside stall selling onions and garlic, before eventually establishing the Sin Heng Chan group which focuses on real estate today.

Speaking to The Sunday Times last Thursday, Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan president Chua Kee Teang, 70, said the 448-page publication aims to showcase and impart the culture, heritage and traditions of the Teochew community to younger Teochews and other ethnic groups.

"We want to transmit our Teochew culture and values, including the importance of family, contributing to the nation and entrepreneurship traits, to younger generations," he said.

The clan association recently organised a beauty pageant to encourage more young women to join its fold and to develop them into Teochew ambassadors. The first such pageant was held in 2017, with about 40 women taking part.

The Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan has more than 5,000 active members. Poit Ip, which means eight districts in the Teochew dialect, stands for the eight Teochew districts in the province of Guangdong, China.

The book is one of about 200 community heritage projects that the National Heritage Board (NHB) has co-funded over the past five years.

NHB's assistant chief executive of policy and community, Mr Alvin Tan, said: "Ground-up projects such as this are important because they



From left: Mr Lim Kim Huat, chief executive secretary of the Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan, with president Chua Kee Teang, vice-president Chan Kian Kuan, and board member and youth committee deputy chair Huang Liang. Mr Chua is holding the Chinese version of The Story of Singapore Teochews, which was released in September. The English version will be launched on Saturday at Chui Huay Lim Club and distributed free to the Teochew community. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

capture community heritage and strengthen community identity for current and future generations to treasure.

"We hope that more groups and individuals will take ownership and embark on similar projects, and in doing so, amplify NHB's efforts to document different aspects of our community heritage."

The book also captures the association's founding story and its journey over the past nine decades.

The book will be launched at Chui

Artist Chua Mia Tee – whose portrait of President Yusof Ishak is on the currency notes – is featured in the book.

Huay Lim Club on Saturday. It will be distributed free to the Teochew community at the book launch.

E-book versions of the publication, in Chinese and English, will be

The story of entrepreneur Eng Liat Kiang, founder of the Sin Heng Chan group, is also featured.

available online from the same day. The Chinese version of the book was launched last September.

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50,000 attend SkillsFuture Advice talks

It aims to help match people with most suitable courses, exceeds its 30,000 target for first year

Rahimah Rashith

The one-year-old SkillsFuture Advice programme has surpassed its target, with 50,000 Singaporeans having attended workshops to help them find courses that will boost their skills and career plans.

Launched in October last year, the project comprises free 90-minute talks in English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil at community centres and clubs.

It is aimed at fresh entrants into the job market, working profes-

als, mid-career switchers, returning professionals and seniors.

It details which SkillsFuture courses are available and suitable for attendees to develop their education, training and job prospects.

Each of the five community development councils was expected to reach out to 6,000 individuals in the first year and all have exceeded that goal, said Education Minister Ong Ye Kung yesterday at an event to mark the anniversary of SkillsFuture Advice @ North West.

The North West CDC has conducted 300 workshops and accounted

for 10,000 participants since it started the talks in December 2017.

Speaking at Nee Soon South Community Club, Mr Ong said it was apt that for the upcoming Budget, Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat mentioned that he is focusing on economic transformation and helping companies cope with it, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Mr Ong said: "It is important - when we look at SMEs, they make up 99 per cent of all our enterprises, they hire about 65 per cent of all employees, but I think there is still room for SMEs to be more productive. Therefore, we will see how we can use SkillsFuture as a national movement to help upgrade our SMEs."

Among those who benefited from the workshops is Mr Muhammad Syafiq Mohammad Ali, 29. After suffering a stroke in 2015, he lost function of the left side of his body and subsequently his job as a technician.

In 2017, he joined Abilities Beyond Limitations and Expectations, where he underwent rehabilitation. The organisation suggested he enrol in the SkillsFuture Advice programme. "After that, I went for the effective communication course with SkillsFuture and got a job as a telemarketer," he said. "The programme helped me understand my capabilities and apply my skills."

The workshop also helped 68-year-old retiree Ong Day Cong pick up new skills to re-enter the workforce as a security guard.

She had worked as a photographer for 32 years before retiring in 2015.

Dr Teo Ho Pin, Mayor of North West District, said a survey of workshop participants showed that 40 per cent have either embarked on a skills upgrading programme or plan to do so.

"Indeed it is very encouraging that Singaporeans want to take the opportunity to upgrade themselves," he said.

"By 2020, we hope to conduct at least 1,000 workshops for Singaporeans to empower more residents to better take charge of their skills upgrading and career development.

"It is important that every Singaporean adopts lifelong learning as part of our living habit and continue to learn."

rahimahr@sph.com.sg



Education Minister Ong Ye Kung and Mayor of North West District, Dr Teo Ho Pin, with Mr Muhammad Syafiq Mohammad Ali, Ms Jessie Tay (left), 61, and Ms Pauline Chan, 62, at yesterday's event. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Making Singapore dementia-inclusive with community help

Over the past year, some 900 seniors and caregivers have benefited from public education programmes aimed at raising awareness of mental health and dementia conditions.

These were carried out, not by the Government, but by the Alzheimer's Disease Association's (ADA) community support team.

It also reached out to people with dementia and their caregivers, to provide allied health services such as counselling and home support.

The initiative was cited by Senior Minister of State for Health and Law Edwin Tong yesterday on how community support plays a critical role in making Singapore a dementia-inclusive society.

With one in 10 seniors aged 60 years and above estimated to have dementia, they and their caregivers will need stronger support, he said at the association's Caregivers' Appreciation Gala Luncheon 2019.

Community partners such as ADA play a critical role in providing

information and socio-emotional support to people with mental health conditions and dementia and their caregivers, said Mr Tong.

"Some caregivers have shared with me that not only have they been greatly encouraged by the community support, they have also become more empowered through these programmes," he said.

"They now know how to manage behavioural changes displayed by their loved ones, and are more aware of community resources which they can tap to support them in caregiving."

During the luncheon at Resorts World Sentosa, 150 caregivers were recognised for their dedication and hard work, and enjoyed music and dance performances by National University of Singapore students.

At the event, ADA and charity RHT Rajan Menon Foundation also agreed to collaborate on the foundation's Successful Ageing Project.

The project aims to develop a

comprehensive and integrated system of care and support as well as an age-friendly environment for the elderly in the community.

One of the ongoing initiatives under the Successful Ageing Project is the publication of an eldercare guidebook with useful information on ageing, including dementia, home and road safety, and financial wealth management.

"We want to encourage more of such local efforts, where the community pools resources to reach out to caregivers and seniors with dementia who need support," said Mr Tong. "We recognise that being a caregiver is not easy, and it takes a whole-of-society effort to support seniors with dementia to age-in-place in the community."

The guidebook is available for download at <http://www.rhtrajanmenon.foundation/media-articles?Category=brochures>

Rahimah Rashith

Stocking up on CNY goodies



Shoppers choosing tidbits at Henderson Community Club yesterday, as they got to stock up early on groceries and goodies for the Chinese New Year. Volunteers turned an empty hall into a marketplace for 170 low- to middle-income families who may not qualify for government or community assistance schemes, with booths selling items such as canned food, biscuits and toothpaste. Under the Henderson-Dawson Project 100-50 initiative, families got to purchase groceries for up to \$200 and pay half the price. The collaboration between volunteer group Heartwarmers and Henderson-Dawson Citizens Consultative Committee is supported by the Sheng Siong Group and Standard Chartered Bank. Typically, families purchase \$100 worth of groceries and pay \$50 at the event every second Saturday of the month, but the amount was bumped up for the upcoming festive season. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

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Colonel Lim Boon Hwee, Commander of the 1st SCDF Division, with (from left) Mrs Laureen Cordova, her son Joshua, daughter Mikaela, and husband Jun. With the help of her brother, Miss Cordova pulled out an unconscious boy from the 2.4m-deep pool at Marymount View condo on Christmas Day, before performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on him until he regained consciousness. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

Siblings commended for saving teen from drowning

They jumped into condo pool to pull out boy found lying at bottom

Fabian Koh

On Christmas Day last year, Miss Mikaela Cordova, 20, and her brother Joshua, 13, gave a special gift to a stranger, when they jumped into a pool at their condominium to save a teenager who was drowning.

After pulling the unconscious 16-year-old boy out of the water and finding he was not breathing, Miss Cordova performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on him until he regained consciousness.

For their heroic act at the Marymount View condominium, the siblings were presented with Community Lifesaver Awards by the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) yesterday, at the 1st SCDF Division headquarters in Queenway.

Their father, Mr Jun Cordova, recalled that the family had planned to go out but decided to stay in for a quiet Christmas afternoon.

They were playing Scrabble in the living room of their 10th floor unit at about 6pm when they heard a cry for help.

"We had opened the windows because we wanted the breeze," said Mr Cordova, 49.

His wife looked out and saw a boy struggling in the pool. While she called 995, Mr Cordova and his children rushed downstairs.

Mr Cordova, who works in the hotel industry, said his daughter volunteered to jump into the water to save the teenager, while he ran to the guardhouse to get help. The 1.7m-tall teenager was found lying face down at the bottom of the 2.4m-deep pool.

"I couldn't pull him out on my own, that's why he (Joshua) jumped in and helped me out," said Miss Cordova, who had taken formal swimming lessons in primary school.

After they pulled the boy out, she performed CPR until an ambulance arrived and took him to Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

Miss Cordova, who works here as a regulatory and quality assurance assistant, first picked up the life-saving skill while taking a course at a

IMPORTANT SKILLS

This is what we want members of the public to do, to learn life-saving skills such as CPR, and have the skill and self-confidence to administer them in times of need.

“

COLONEL LIM BOON HWEE, Commander of the 1st SCDF Division, on the importance of learning life-saving skills.

polytechnic in Canada.

The incident was the first time her CPR skills were called into action.

"I am very grateful and very honoured to be able to do something like this. It makes me really appreciate the people who do this every day as a career," she said.

"At first, a part of me wasn't sure it was actually happening until we saw the guy (in the pool)."

While she remained calm throughout the ordeal, it was when SCDF officers arrived at the scene that the reality of the situation set in and she felt shaken.

They have not met the boy they saved as he had to return home to Malaysia. But they have been interacting with his family friend, who lives on the 16th floor of their block.

The friend contacted the Cordova family, who are from the Philippines, to express the gratitude of the teenager's family.

The siblings' mother, Mrs Laureen Cordova, 46, said she was very proud of her children for stepping up when it mattered.

Colonel Lim Boon Hwee, Commander of the 1st SCDF Division, who presented the awards to the siblings, commended their actions.

"It was a courageous effort to pull the 16-year-old boy out. You had the calmness and composure," he said. "This is what we want members of the public to do, to learn life-saving skills such as CPR, and have the skill and self-confidence to administer them in times of need."

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5 arrested for drink driving in islandwide operation

Timothy Goh

Four men and a woman were arrested on Friday during an islandwide anti-drink driving enforcement operation conducted by the Traffic Police.

The five, aged between 21 and 49, failed a test for alcohol consumption and were arrested for drink driving.

During the operation, 30 drivers were stopped and tested.

The highest breathalyser test result was 55 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath, which is more than the prescribed legal limit of 35mcg of alcohol per 100ml of breath.

Those convicted of drink driving for the first time can be fined between \$1,000 and \$5,000, and may be banned from driving for at least a year, depending on the results of their breathalyser tests.

As this will result in their licences being invalid afterwards, they will have to retake and pass their driving tests if they wish to obtain their licences again.

Repeat offenders may be fined up to \$30,000 and jailed for up to three years. They may also receive up to six strokes of the cane if they cause death or serious injury.

Deputy commander of Traffic Police, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Anthony Yap, said: "The Traffic Police conduct regular enforcement operations against irresponsible motorists who choose to put themselves and other road users in danger by drink driving."

"Drink driving is a serious offence and the Traffic Police will not hesitate to take tough enforcement action against motorists who choose to drink and drive."

In the first nine months of last year, there were 126 drink-driving accidents – a 22.3 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2017.

The number of casualties from such accidents also increased to 160 in the first nine months of last year, up from 126 in the same period in 2017.

On Dec 21, the police launched the Anti-Drink Drive Campaign 2018 at Zouk in Clarke Quay.

At the time, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs and National Development Sun Xueling said: "We are considering stiffer penalties – higher fines, longer disqualification periods and lengthier jail terms. This will further strengthen the deterrent effect of our laws."

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4 men held after scuffle at wholesale centre

Goh Yan Han

Four men were arrested after a scuffle at Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre on Friday evening.

The police were alerted to a case of affray just after 7pm at 24 Wholesale Centre. Four men, understood to be aged 23, 29, 58, and 59, were arrested in relation to the case.

The incident occurred when two debt collectors from Majestic Debt Recovery turned up at a stall to collect a debt of \$6,800, reported Shin Min Daily News.

The owner of the debt collecting company, Mr Makko Poh, 37, told the Chinese-language newspaper that he had sent two of his employees to the wholesale centre to ask the owner of a vegetable and fruit stall for money that had been owed for at least four months.

He said that after his staff identified themselves and stated their reason for being there, the stall owner became increasingly agitated. He then began to hit one of the debt collectors and called his employees to join in.

The other debt collector was standing at the side and shouting at them to stop, Mr Poh told The Sunday Times.

Shin Min reported that according to videos that Majestic Debt Recovery showed it, there were more than 10 people surrounding one of the debt collectors when some of them suddenly began to throw punches. The debt collector was struck and fell to the floor.

"He tried to defend himself by blocking and pushing them away," Mr Poh said.

Another video showed a staff member from the vegetable and fruit stall using a fire extinguisher to hit one of the debt collectors, breaking his spectacles.

Mr Poh said he will be meeting his lawyer tomorrow.

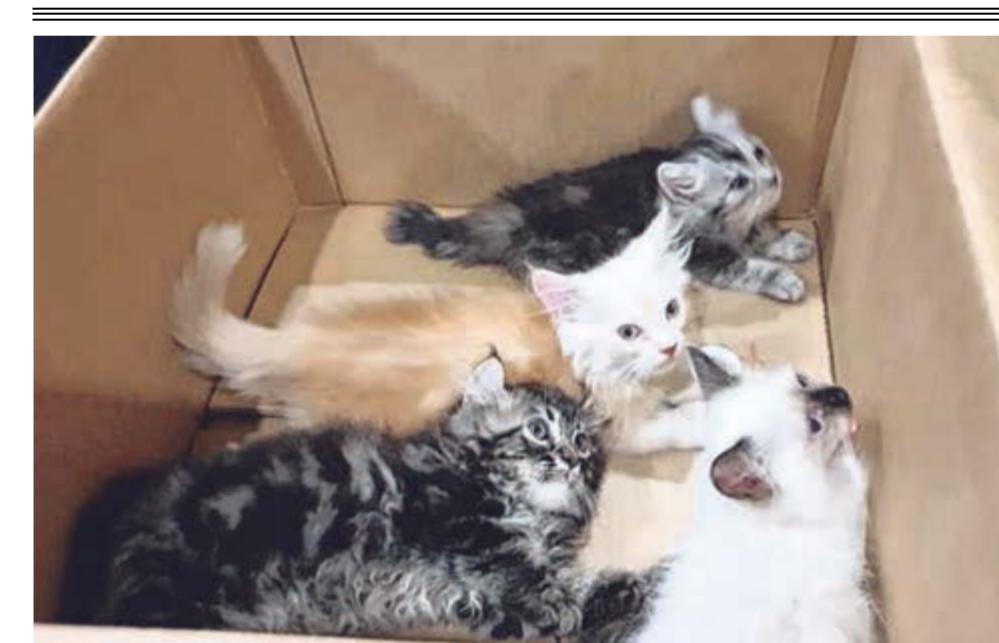
"Aggressive debtors we have met before, but never have we met people who owe money and still beat up those who are collecting the money from them," he said.

The Sunday Times understands that one of the men arrested was a 29-year-old debt collector, who was taken to the National University Hospital with minor injuries.

The other three arrested were the stall owner and his workers.

The owner was released on bail yesterday morning, an employee of the stall told Shin Min.

When it comes to smuggling, some criminals try hiding things in creative places such as cereal cartons, door panels and even spectacle cases.



Meow! Smuggling suspect stuffed 4 kittens in trousers

When it comes to smuggling, some criminals try hiding things in creative places such as cereal cartons, door panels and even spectacle cases.

And then some just fall back on the simple "stuff it down your pants" method.

Officers from the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA)

encountered one such case on Wednesday, when a man was caught with four live kittens in his trousers.

The suspect, a 45-year-old Singaporean man, was in a car at Tuas Checkpoint when officers heard "meowing" sounds from a bulge in his trousers, prompting them to conduct further checks.

The case was referred to the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority for investigation. The kittens were also placed under quarantine there, to be cared for.

The ICA said yesterday that smuggled animals are of unknown health status and may introduce exotic diseases, such as rabies, to Singapore.

Under the Animals and Birds Act, the importation of any animal or live bird into Singapore without a licence is illegal. Offenders may be fined up to \$10,000 and/or jailed for up to a year.

Timothy Goh

A 45-year-old Singaporean man allegedly tried to smuggle four live kittens into Singapore via Tuas Checkpoint on Wednesday, by hiding them in his trousers. But the kittens' meowing gave him away.

PHOTO:

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Chinese soldiers on armoured assault vehicles during a military parade in Beijing. President Xi Jinping has once again said that China reserves the right to use force to achieve reunification with Taiwan, even as it strives to achieve this goal via peaceful means. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

gressive Party, became Taiwan's President in 2016, Beijing has been increasing pressure on the self-ruled island.

It suspects that Ms Tsai wants to push for Taiwan's formal independence, which is a red line for Beijing.

Meanwhile, Ms Tsai yesterday responded to China's continued threats, calling on the international community to support and defend Taiwan's democracy and way of life.

"We hope that the international community takes it seriously, and can voice support and help us," Reuters reported Ms Tsai as saying, as she addressed China's threats to use force to bring Taiwan under its control.

Yesterday, the South China Morning Post reported that Ms Tsai was asked if her administration would want talks with Beijing.

She responded by saying Taiwan did not oppose talks, but Beijing must "move towards democracy, protect human rights and renounce the use of force against us".

Shanghai-based military expert Ni Lexington told The Sunday Times that Mr Xi's speech to the CMC was another clear sign to Taiwan of Beijing's firm position on the issue of reunification.

"This is an important moment and China wants to show that its attitude is firm and clear," said Mr Ni.

Beijing-based security analyst of Beihang University, Professor Wang Xiangsui, noted that since assuming the chairmanship of the CMC in 2012, President Xi had made repeated orders for the People's Liberation Army to raise its combat-readiness.

This was a response against the increasing security challenges facing China, including the United States' view of the country as a strategic competitor and the goal of reunification of the country.

He noted that Taiwan still thinks it can resist reunification with military force and has been buying military equipment to maintain the balance with China.

"So (for Mr Xi) to give these commands to the military, is a natural response to these challenges posed by Taiwan," said Prof Wang.

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Xi orders forces to be battle-ready; Taiwan calls for support

Chinese President gives Taipei clear sign of Beijing's firm position on reunification

Danson Cheong
China Correspondent
In Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered the country's military to be ready for battle and prepare for mili-

tary conflict, even as Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen yesterday made a call for international support to defend the island's democracy.

Mr Xi, speaking at a meeting of China's top brass, the Central Military Commission (CMC), had said last Friday that China was facing

increasing risks and challenges.

"The world is facing a period of major changes never seen in a century and China is still in an important period of strategic opportunity for development," he was reported as saying.

He stressed that the military needed to deepen planning and preparations for war and battle, in order to ensure that if situations arose, it would be able to quickly and effectively deal with them,

state news agency Xinhua reported.

Mr Xi's comments came just days after he remarked that China deserved the right to use force to achieve reunification with Taiwan, even as it strives to achieve this goal via peaceful means.

He had said then that reunification with the self-ruled island, which Beijing regards as a renegade province, was inevitable.

His latest comments to the CMC also come amid escalating tensions with the United States over issues including Taiwan's status and trade.

Last Friday, Xinhua reported that Mr Xi - who is also chairman of the CMC - called on the military units to "correctly understand" major national security and development trends, strengthen their sense of urgency, crisis and battle, and firmly do the work of preparing for military conflict.

He also signed off on the CMC's first order of 2019 to launch the start of a year of military training.

Since Ms Tsai, who is from the pro-independence Democratic Pro-



MAJOR CHANGES

The world is facing a period of major changes never seen in a century, and China is still in an important period of strategic opportunity for development.

“

CHINESE PRESIDENT XI JINPING, on the increasing risks and challenges that China is facing, adding that the military needs to deepen planning and preparations for war and battle.

Railguns to give Chinese warships big advantage

BEIJING • China's warships will soon be equipped with electromagnetic railguns, in a move that will put its fleet ahead of the rest of the world with some of the most advanced weapons technology, state media reported.

According to the Global Times, breakthroughs have been made by the naval engineering team led by Rear-Admiral Ma Weiming in multiple related sectors, national television reported last Wednesday.

Rear-Admiral Ma, an academician at the Naval University of Engineering in Wuhan, Hubei province, and his team have gained innovative results in electromagnetic-launching technology with fully independent intellectual property, cctv.com reported.

The report came at a time when a Chinese landing ship, allegedly equipped with an experimental electromagnetic railgun, was caught on camera at an undisclosed location carrying out a trial run. However, the authenticity of the photo could not be verified.

Last February, the same landing ship with the electromagnetic railgun was photographed in harbour, the Beijing-based Science and Technology Daily reported.

Mr Li Jie, a Beijing-based naval expert, told the Global Times last Thursday that China's electromagnetic railgun development has reached a mature stage after a series of tests. He said that if the recent trial run was true, it could be among the final tests before the

weapon's delivery to the People's Liberation Army Navy.

An electromagnetic railgun can fire projectiles via electromagnetic force at incredibly destructive velocity. It can reach farther ranges when compared with standard artillery, and maintain high accuracy, military experts said.

The United States is also experimenting with the new weapon, but China will be the first country to actually equip a warship with it, according to the cctv.com report.

China's naval electromagnetic weapons and equipment have surpassed those of other countries, the report said.

Chinese military experts expect Type 055, China's 10,000-tonne-class guided missile destroyer, to

use the electromagnetic railgun.

Meanwhile, China has tested its most powerful non-nuclear weapon, dubbed the "Mother of All Bombs" by official media in a refer-

ence to a US munition used in Afghanistan, reported Agence France-Presse.

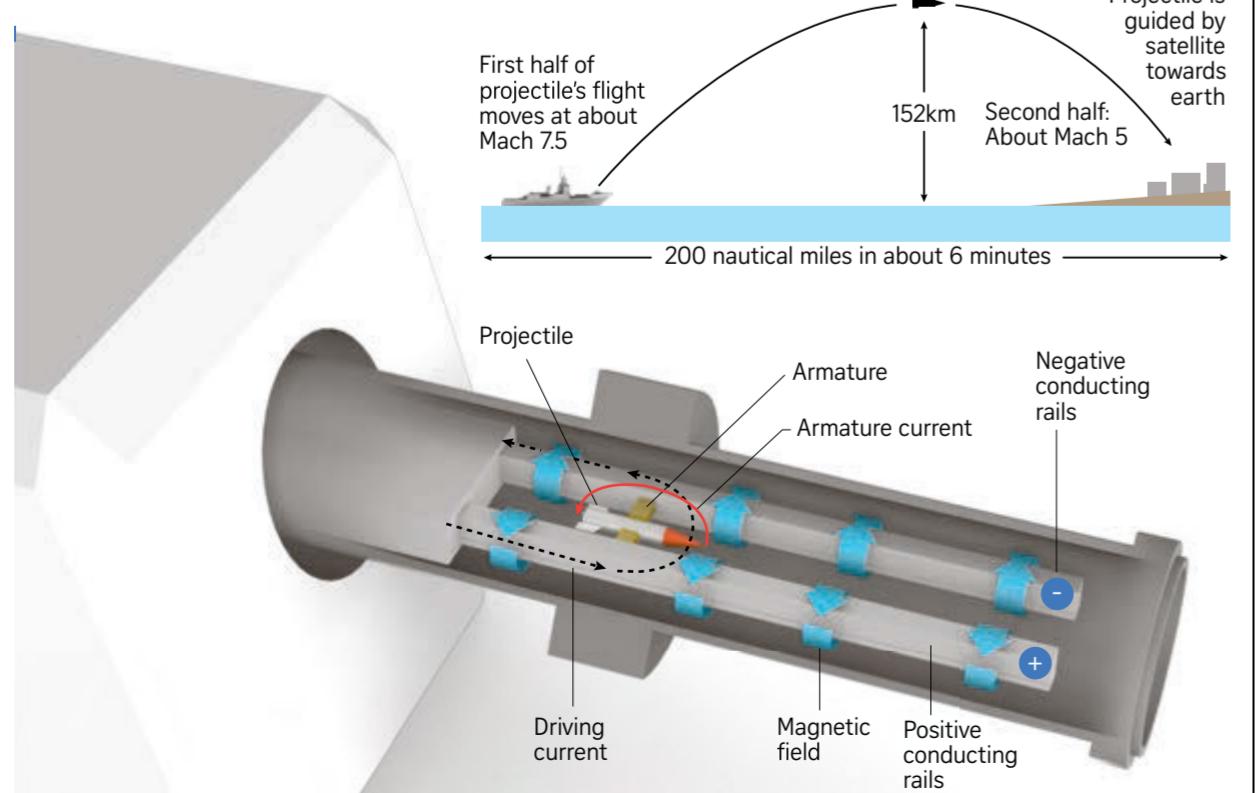
In a short video published on the website of state arms manufacturer

Norinco, the massive bomb drops onto a plain and produces a gigantic ball of fire and black smoke.

The bomb - whose strength is second only to that of a nuclear weapon, according to the official Xinhua agency - was dropped by a Chinese H-6K bomber. No details on the date, location or range of the bomb blast were provided.

How a railgun works

A railgun is a large electric circuit, using electromagnetic force to propel a projectile along electrically-charged rails



Source: DAILY MAIL, POPULAR SCIENCE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

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Leonardo DiCaprio testifies in US as part of 1MDB probe

Actor could likely provide insights into financier at heart of scandal

WASHINGTON • Actor Leonardo DiCaprio made a secret appearance before a District of Columbia grand jury in recent months to testify as part of the Justice Department's expansive investigation into a multi-billion-dollar fraud surrounding a Malaysian government investment fund, according to people familiar with the case.

The furtive appearance by the actor is the latest twist in a case that

has drawn in a medley of characters – including a rapper who was once part of the Fugees, Malaysia's former prime minister Najib Razak and a prominent fundraiser for President Donald Trump.

Prosecutors consider DiCaprio a witness who can provide useful insights about a swashbuckling Malaysian financier alleged to have pilfered and laundered billions of dollars from the investment fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), and then financed a lobbying campaign to end the investigation, the people said.

The US Department of Justice

(DOJ) had said US\$4.5 billion (\$6.1 billion) was misappropriated from 1MDB by top Malaysian officials and their associates. DiCaprio is not a target of the probe.

The financier in the case, Low Taek Jho, was charged in federal court in New York late last year in connection with the theft and money laundering.

Prosecutors have pursued related cases concerning former Goldman Sachs bankers they say were involved in laundering money and a DOJ employee who admitted to helping the lobbying campaign.

It is unclear exactly what Di-

Caprio told grand jurors, or how the authorities were able to get him in and out of the federal courthouse without anyone noticing.

A DOJ spokesman and a representative for DiCaprio declined to comment. In the past, his spokesman has said he was cooperating with the probe and was "entirely supportive of all efforts to assure that justice is done in this matter".

Prosecutors recently alleged in court papers that former Fugees rapper Prakazrel "Pras" Michel was involved in setting up accounts to make payments for Low's lobbying effort to kill the investigation, and

that he hired an investment firm owner to press his case with the Trump administration.

People familiar with the case said the investment firm owner was Mr Elliott Broidy, a veteran Republican fund-raiser who helped corral big donors to support Mr Donald Trump's campaign. Neither Mr Broidy nor Michel has been charged with any crimes, though people familiar with the case said investigators are still exploring whether they violated any laws.

Prosecutors allege in court papers that Low cosied up to DiCaprio, letting the actor gamble on his tab at The Venetian casino in Las Vegas, gifting him artwork and helping him get funding for the hit movie *Wolf of Wall Street*.

Low and DiCaprio were introduced, prosecutors have said, by Riza Shahriaz bin Abdul Aziz, the stepson of Najib, who has already been charged in Malaysia in connection with the scandal.

Low's whereabouts are not known although he is believed to be in China. WASHINGTON POST

Mahathir takes aim at Johor crown prince

KUALA LUMPUR • The federal government in Malaysia has the right to respond to comments made by the Malay rulers over its administration of the country, said Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

He was speaking last Friday in response to comments made by the Johor Crown Prince, Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim, which urged the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government to stop polarising every issue and start governing the country.

"He (the prince) doesn't understand the federation. Perhaps he wasn't born during that time, so he is unaware, but I was born at that time," Tun Dr Mahathir told a news conference, when asked to comment on what the prince had said. "When we formed the federation, it meant the federation governs the whole nation."

The Prime Minister added: "We have a list of what is governed by the federation and by the states. However, it is not stated anywhere that the federation cannot issue statements in response to statements issued by the states."

The prince had previously asked federal Cabinet ministers not to comment on issues relating to Johor state matters.

Dr Mahathir, asked what he thought of Tunku Ismail's impression of how PH is running the country, said: "He has no position (in the government)."

The prince had said last Thursday that he really wanted the government to be successful.

"I wake up everyday hoping to be wrong. But they keep proving me right. I did the same with the old government, and I'm doing the same now."

"No difference. Just wanting the best for the people."

"Some may not like what I say, but that's the challenge. To keep speaking up for the people who can't," Tunku Ismail wrote on his Facebook page.

THESTAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



Malaysia's Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu has confirmed that his son Ahmad Saiful Islam Mohamad has been arrested in an anti-vice raid.



Sarawakian Esther Joseph Kim celebrating her wedding with six Muslim friends in attendance as her bridesmaids. Photographer Ariffin Husain described it as "the most unique wedding in 2018", and said he hoped to see more such multicultural ceremonies in the near future. PHOTO: ARIFFIN HUSAIN/FACEBOOK

Sarawak church wedding with Muslim bridesmaids

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PETALING JAYA • The concept of unity in diversity came to life at a church wedding in Sarawak which involved Muslim bridesmaids.

Pictures of the Dec 29 wedding show Sarawakian couple Sylvester Voon and Esther Joseph Kim getting married at St Joseph's Cathedral in the state capital Kuching.

Ms Kim had six Muslim bridesmaids who wore dark red baju kuring and pink hijab (headress).

Wedding photographer Ariffin Husain, who captured the event at the cathedral and a nearby courthouse, described it on his Facebook page as "the most unique wedding in 2018".

"You won't get to see this every day... It's a church wedding, but all the bridesmaids are Muslims."

"Wearing headscarves too, it is very rare indeed," he wrote.

Mr Ariffin added that while Ms Kim is from Sarawak, most of her bridesmaids are from peninsular Malaysia.

"This is what we call 1 Malaysia... even though they are different in race and religion, this did not stop these good friends from celebrating one of the happiest days of their friend," he wrote.

He said it was rare and sweet to see friends from various races respecting each other, and he expressed the hope of seeing more such multicultural ceremonies in the near future.

Mr Ariffin told The Star newspaper that while he has been in this line of work since 2012, this wed-

ding is the most special and beautiful for him.

"I hope that with the racial issues which happened lately, we can learn to put aside our differences, embrace each other with open arms and live together in harmony," he added.

His post received more than 800 likes and was shared over 250 times at the time of writing.

Many congratulated the couple and liked the photographs taken by Mr Ariffin.

At the end of last year, mStar – the Malay news site of The Star – reported a heart-warming story of an Indian doctor who chose nine of his close Malay friends to be grooms-men for his wedding.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

KL minister says son, nabbed in drug raid, must face the law

KUALA LUMPUR • Malaysia's Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu said yesterday that his son has been picked up by the police after testing positive for drugs.

And he wants his 31-year old son to be dealt with by the law.

Mr Mohamad, known widely in Malaysia as Mat Sabu, confirmed local media reports that his son Ahmad Saiful Islam Mohamad was arrested in an anti-vice raid.

"Following this arrest, my family and I leave the matter entirely up to the authorities to act in accordance with the process of the law," he said.

"My son, like the children of others, is also subject to the country's legal processes," Mr Mo-

hamad, 64, said in a Facebook post yesterday evening.

It was learnt that Ahmad Saiful was picked up by a combined team involving the Dang Wangi Narcotics Crime Investigation Department and its Secret Society, Gaming and Vice Division, The Star newspaper reported on its website.

The raid was conducted early yesterday in the Jalan Ampang area, one of Kuala Lumpur's major thoroughfares that has many nightspots and restaurants.

Sources close to the investigation confirmed that Ahmad Saiful tested positive for marijuana.

He was among 101 people who were checked during the anti-vice raid, The Star said.

He was one of two persons detained after testing positive for the drug.

Meanwhile, Sinar Harian newspaper reported that Kuala Lumpur's deputy police chief, Deputy Commissioner Zainuddin Yaacob, had confirmed the incident.

The case is being investigated under the penal code for drug abuse. Not much is known about Ahmad Saiful.

His father, on the other hand, is a popular politician. Mr Mohamad is president of Parti Amanah Negara, one of the four factions that make up the ruling Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition.

Amahan is a moderate Islamic party, formed in 2015 after a group of leaders broke away from the conservative Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS). Mr Mohamad was deputy president of PAS.

Mr Mohamad was named Defence Minister by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad four days after PH won the general election on May 9 last year.



MADDY, JASON & ARNOLD ARE BACK!



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The two women who caused the furore – Ms Bindu Ammini, 42, and Ms Kanaka Durga, 44 – being escorted by police after they tried to enter the Sabarimala temple in December last year. PHOTO: REUTERS

Protests continue in Kerala over temple controversy

Issue of women entering Sabarimala temple sparks violence, with thousands arrested

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

The southern Indian state of Kerala, known for its calm backwaters and lush greenery, has continued to see violent protests over the entry of women to the Sabarimala temple, and 15,000 policemen have been put on duty.

Police said attackers yesterday hurled a home-made bomb at the home of a politician from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and

set ablaze an office of its Hindu nationalist parent group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

A bomb was also thrown at the home of a Communist Party of India (Marxist) legislator, according to Indian media reports.

The protests first erupted after two women in their 40s created history by becoming the first women between the ages of 10 and 50 to enter the Sabarimala temple, which is dedicated to the deity Ayyappa, on Jan 2.

The temple's traditional entry ban on women of menstruating age was overturned by the Supreme

Court last September, but Hindu groups and other devotees managed to keep women from entering it for nearly three months.

Protests were further fuelled by reports of a third woman entering the temple. Sri Lankan national Sasikala, according to the police, entered Sabarimala and offered prayers. But police said the woman, who was scared of the repercussions, later denied being able to offer prayers at the temple.

Director-general of police Loknath Behera, the highest-ranking police official in Kerala, told The Sunday Times that police had arrested 3,178 people for offences ranging from disturbing the peace to stone-throwing and damaging public property, and that reports had been registered against 37,000

people over the last three days.

"There are various kinds of people who are protesting, from those with political links to non-political persons, hooligans, miscreants and criminals," said Mr Behera. "We have put around 15,000 policemen in various places."

Kerala is the only state in the country with 100 per cent literacy. It has about 2.5 million people, many of them working in the Arabian Gulf countries.

Politics in the southern state has been dominated by the United Democratic Front, a coalition of parties led by the Congress, and its rival Left Democratic Front (LDF), led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The LDF is currently in power.

The Sabarimala issue also has po-

itical overtones, said analysts, particularly with India heading into general elections and Mr Modi's BJP trying to increase its presence in southern India, including Kerala.

The BJP's national leadership had hailed the Supreme Court's ruling. But in Kerala, the BJP has come out against the entry of women to the temple, and has been in support of those seeking to continue the tradition of keeping women out. Mr Modi is expected to attend meetings in Kerala later this month.

Similarly, the Congress in Kerala has also opposed the entry of women to the temple, backing traditional beliefs.

While political parties have been blaming each other for the ongoing violence, political analysts said the BJP would find it tough to gain a foothold in Kerala.

"Given the nature of Kerala politics, try as it might, I am not sure the BJP will get mileage. They seem to have limited space in politics of the state, given that it is largely Congress versus Left. The BJP would love to jump into the fray," said political analyst Sandeep Shastri, who is pro-vice-chancellor of Jain University.

gnirmala@sph.com.sg



Bushfires rage in Australia's south-east

MELBOURNE • Wildfires burned in parts of Australia's densely-populated south-east yesterday, although weather officials expected falling temperatures to bring relief for Sydney by early afternoon.

One fire in eastern Victoria, the country's second most populous state, prompted the fire authorities to issue a watch and act warning for residents in 14 towns.

The fire near Rosedale, about 200km east of Melbourne, had burnt more than 10,000ha and sudden wind changes last Friday created risky conditions for roughly 40 firefighters, an emergency official said.

"They found themselves in a very serious situation and they were shaken," Mr Andrew Crisp, the state's emergency management commissioner, said yesterday.

The origins of the Rosedale fire and another in Victoria were being treated as suspicious, with police and the fire authorities investigating their cause, he added.

In the southern island state of Tasmania, a bushfire had burnt through 15,000ha of south-western wilderness by yesterday, fire officials said. Both Victoria and Tasmania had sweltered through above average temperatures last

Friday, with Melbourne recording a near-record 42 deg C and Hobart reaching 40 deg C.

But both states will see far cooler temperatures over the weekend, following a rapid cool change, said weather officials.

"At 4.00pm, (Melbourne) was at 42 degrees, by 4.20pm it was down to 26 degrees, and then continued to drop after that," meteorologist Keris Arndt from the weather bureau told Reuters.

Yet by yesterday morning, the cooling temperatures had not reached parts of Sydney, Australia's most populous city, where the mercury reached almost 38 deg C by mid-day. A Bureau of Meteorology forecaster said the weather pattern that brought temperature drops to Melbourne and Tasmania was expected to reach Sydney by afternoon. REUTERS

Smoke from a bushfire in south-west Tasmania hovering above the state capital Hobart last Friday.
PHOTO: REUTERS

WorldBriefs

Russia wants info on citizen held in US

MOSCOW • Russia yesterday said it wanted an explanation from Washington over the arrest of one of its nationals, as Moscow continued to hold a US citizen for alleged espionage.

FBI agents arrested Dmitry Makarenko on Dec 29 on Saipan, a US island in the western Pacific, and he had since been taken to Florida, a Russian Foreign Ministry statement said.

It said the US authorities had failed to inform Moscow of the arrest and it had found out about it from the man's family.

Meanwhile, a top Russian diplomat yesterday said the case of Paul Whelan, a US national detained in Moscow, was very serious. Whelan was arrested on Dec 28 "while carrying out an act of espionage", the FSB security service said.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

India declares fugitive an economic offender

MUMBAI • A court in India set up under anti-money laundering laws yesterday declared liquor and aviation tycoon Vijay Mallya a "fugitive economic offender", paving the way for his assets to be seized, according to Reuters partner ANI.

India recently approved a Bill empowering the seizure of assets of wealthy fugitives whose economic offences or crimes involve sums of more than 1 billion rupees (\$19.4 million).

The Bill is part of a push to prosecute a number of accused who have fled India in the last four years even as the country reels from banking scandals, including a US\$2 billion (\$2.7 billion) fraud at state-run Punjab National Bank that was uncovered in February. REUTERS

Aussie police nab three in Melbourne protest

MELBOURNE • Australian police have made at least three arrests after hundreds of far-right and anti-racism groups faced off yesterday in Melbourne, according to local media reports.

Police in riot gear spent more than three hours trying to separate the two groups who were yelling at one another, and scuffles broke out, said Australian Broadcasting Corporation on its website.

The scuffles spilled onto the road when far-right protesters attacked a car with a loudspeaker broadcasting "Sudanese are welcome, racists are not". Multiple men among the right-wing protesters were seen giving Nazi salutes, said the news.com.au site, which showed pictures of men displaying the offensive gesture.

Victoria's police Superintendent Tony Silva told a news conference later that one person was nabbed for breaching bail conditions, another on a drug charge and the third was charged with possessing a dangerous article.

China's population to peak at 1.44 billion in 2029

SHANGHAI • China's population is set to reach a peak of 1.44 billion in 2029 and start a long period of "unstoppable" decline in 2030, government scholars said in a research report.

The world's most populous country must now draw up policies to try and cope with a declining labour force and a rapidly ageing population, according to the summary of the latest edition of the Green Book Of Population And Labour published by the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) last Friday.

Growth in the working population has now stagnated, the report said, and the rising number of elderly people will have a far-reaching impact on the country's social and economic development, especially if fertility rates remain low.

"From a theoretical point of view, the long-term population decline, especially when it is accompanied by a continuously ageing population, is bound to cause very unfavourable social and economic consequences," it said.

China's population is expected to fall back to 1.36 billion by the middle of the century, it said, which could mean a decline in the workforce of up to 200 million. If fertility rates remain unchanged, the population could fall to 1.17 billion by 2065, it said.

China decided in 2016 to relax a controversial "one-child policy" aimed at curbing population growth, and allow all couples to have two children.

However, the country's birth rate still fell 3.5 per cent in 2017 and is expected to have fallen again last year.

China's "dependency rate" – or the proportion of non-working people, including children and the elderly, in the total population – rose for the first time in more than 30 years in 2011, and is widely predicted to increase further for at least the next few decades.

The proportion of retirees is projected to rise until 2060, the CASS report said, and while the decision to relax "one-child" rules was designed to rebalance China's age structure, in the short term it will also lead to a greater dependency rate.

REUTERS

Underground nursery puts Tokyo hub on growth path

Chiba government turns abandoned tunnel into a fully-automated vegetable farm

Walter Sim
Japan Correspondent
In Makuhari, Chiba

200

Number of heads of lettuce the farm produces a day, along with other produce such as baby leaves and edible flowers.

2,500

Number of plants a day the farm aims to produce next year by using mass production equipment; the plan is for 5,000 heads of lettuce a day by 2022.



Japanese conveyor belt manufacturer Itoh Denki has converted an unused tunnel 10m below ground into what is being billed as the world's first fully automated underground plant factory in Chiba prefecture. PHOTO: ITOH DENKI

underground plant nursery.

"There was this huge tunnel because our original plan was to build high-rise office buildings but things changed with the economic downturn," said Mr Takefumi Toki, the vice-commissioner for public enterprises and land management at the Chiba prefectural government.

He added that there was a lot of talk on how to best use the idle tunnel, which is 10m underground, 6m high and 4m wide. There was even a plan to turn it into a wine cellar.

The plant nursery is run by Itoh Denki, a global leader in conveyor belt manufacturing, which has a 70 per cent share in the business and built the roller conveyor system

that is the nucleus of the factory's automation.

Japanese technology firm Fujitsu provided the monitoring systems.

Trial runs began in December 2017, and the farm now produces 200 heads of lettuce a day along with other produce such as baby leaves and edible flowers.

The plan is to increase this to 2,500 plants a day by next year using mass production equipment – and then to 5,000 heads of lettuce a day by 2022.

Space-starved cities in Japan are seeking innovative and more efficient ways to grow crops, including on walls and rooftops.

The Tokyo Metro, too, has con-

verted idle ground beneath its elevated train tracks near the Nishi-ka-sai Station in eastern Tokyo into a plant facility.

Altogether, the number of nurseries running solely on artificial light has tripled from 64 in March 2011 to 183 in February last year, figures from the Japan Greenhouse Horticulture Association show.

Only the underground processes at the Makuhari Farm Vechica – the name is an amalgamation of the words vegetable, Chiba and chika (underground in Japanese) – are automated, with manual labour still required for the phases conducted above ground.

This includes the planting of the

seedlings in box-shaped enclosed spaces known as cell modules. These are then sent via conveyor belt underground, where the modules are collectively placed in group units that use technology to control LED lighting and the circulation of carbon dioxide and liquid nutrients.

When ready for harvest, they are then sent via conveyor belt above ground again, for the manual harvesting and packaging for delivery.

Mr Nobuaki Okada, Itoh Denki's operating officer for plant factory research and development, said the company is looking at how to automate more of these processes above ground.

He cited as one major advantage the factory's consistent temperatures of an optimal 18 to 20 deg C throughout the year, regardless of the change in seasons.

This means the farm does not need to rely on any heating or air-conditioning, making it three times more energy efficient than a conventional farm of similar size.

"Chiba prefecture has traditionally held the idea to develop the Makuhari district into a testbed for new industries and global initiatives, and so it is fitting to have this fully-automated underground plant factory here," Mr Toki said.

The Makuhari district has come a long way despite its early failures, and is now growing into its own as an innovation hub. It is home to 440 companies, six hotels and three universities, with 230,000 people working or studying there.

Among its biggest names is Japanese e-commerce giant Zozo.

Next year, the excitement is set to multiply when its 72,000 sq m convention centre, the Makuhari Messe, hosts three Olympic and four Paralympic sports – the largest number of events for a single venue.

waltsim@sph.com.sg

Record \$4.2m for giant tuna at Toyosu's first New Year's auction

TOKYO • A Japanese sushi entrepreneur paid a record US\$3.1 million (\$4.2 million) for a giant bluefin tuna yesterday as Tokyo's new fish market, which replaced the world-famous Tsukiji last year, held its first pre-dawn New Year's auction.

Bidding stopped at a whopping 333.6 million yen for the enormous 278kg fish – an endangered species – that was caught off Japan's northern coast.

Self-styled "Tuna King" Kiyoshi Kimura paid the top price, which doubled the previous record of 155 million yen, also paid by him in 2013. "It's the best tuna. I was able to buy a delicious, super fresh tuna," the sushi restaurant chain owner proudly told reporters.

"The price was higher than originally thought, but I hope our customers will eat this excellent tuna," Mr Kimura said after the auction.

Tsukiji – the world's biggest fish market and a popular tourist attraction in an area packed with restaurants and shops – moved in October last year to Toyosu, a former gas plant a bit further east.

Opened in 1935, Tsukiji was best known for its pre-dawn auctions of tuna, caught from all corners of the world, for retail sale by everyone from top Michelin-star sushi chefs to ordinary grocery stores.

Especially at the first auction of the new year, wholesalers and sushi tycoons have been known to pay eye-watering prices for the biggest and best fish.

Despite the fish market's relocation, the auction ritual remained intact. Before dawn, buyers in rubber boots were inspecting the quality of the giant fresh and frozen tuna by examining the neatly cut end with flashlights.

At 5.10am, handbells rang to signal the auction was on and the air filled with the sound of auctioneers yelling prices at buyers, who raised fingers to indicate interest.

In a roar of wholesalers surrounding the day's best tuna, an auctioneer hammered the top price as the Kimura side outbid his rival in



Sushi entrepreneur Kiyoshi Kimura preparing to cut up the 278kg bluefin tuna at his restaurant after his successful \$4.2m bid at the first pre-dawn New Year's auction at Toyosu market, a former gas plant that has replaced the world-famous Tsukiji market. The new market has opened its auction warehouse to visitors to witness the event from a balcony. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

a thrilling head-to-head battle.

Japan consumes a large portion of the global bluefin catch, a highly prized sushi ingredient known in Japan as "kuro maguro" (black tuna) and dubbed by sushi connoisseurs as the "black diamond" because of its scarcity. A single piece of "otoro", or the fish's fatty underbelly, can cost dozens of dollars at

high-end Tokyo restaurants.

A tuna similar in size to the one just sold would, on a normal day, fetch around US\$60,000, according to the BBC.

The new market has opened its auction warehouse to let visitors witness the event from a balcony, in the hope of becoming a must-see spot for tourists, like Tsukiji.

"Finally, the first New Year auction was held at Toyosu market," said market official Yoshihiko Otaki. "We have a lot of tuna here like we did in Tsukiji," he added.

Tuna is prized around the world for its use in sushi, but experts warn growing demand has made it an endangered species.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Defect to S. Korea, North's ex-diplomat urges missing colleague

SEOUL • A former North Korean diplomat who staged a high-profile defection to the South, yesterday urged an old colleague who has gone missing in Italy to defect to Seoul, following a report that he was seeking asylum in the US.

Mr Jo Song Gil, the 44-year-old who was until recently North Ko-

rea's acting ambassador to Italy, disappeared with his wife after leaving the embassy without notice in early November, South Korean lawmakers said last Thursday.

Mr Jo has sought asylum in the United States and is under the protection of Italian intelligence, Italy's La Repubblica newspaper

said last Friday, citing an unidentified diplomatic source.

In an open letter, Mr Thae Yong Ho, Pyongyang's former deputy ambassador to Britain, who said he went to the same university and worked with Mr Jo before defecting to South Korea in 2016, urged Mr Jo to follow in his footsteps.

To defect to the South is an "obligation, not a choice" for North Korean diplomats committed to unification, Mr Thae said, calling Seoul "the outpost" for that task.

"If you come to South Korea, the day when our suffering colleagues and North Korean citizens are liberated from the fetters would be moved forward," he said in the letter released on his website.

"If you come to Seoul, even more

of our colleagues would follow suit, and the unification would be accomplished by itself."

Mr Thae said his family visited Mr Jo in Rome in 2008, where the latter was studying from 2006 to 2009. He guided them to sites such as St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City.

Although South Korea could not be "heaven on earth" it is a place where Mr Jo can realise his wishes, Mr Thae said, highlighting the ardent desire for unification among many of the roughly 32,000 defectors in the country.

"Isn't it the only thing you and I, as North Korean diplomats, should do the rest of our lives – to bring about unification and hand over a unified nation to our children?" Mr Thae said. REUTERS

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German cybercops aware of 'dodgy' online activity in Dec

Under-fire watchdog says it could not link activity to other data breaches till last week

BERLIN • Under fire for a mass hacking attack on hundreds of German politicians, including Chancellor Angela Merkel, the country's cyber security watchdogs said yesterday that they were contacted by a lawmaker in early December about suspicious activity on private e-mail and social media accounts, but could not connect this to other data breaches until last week.

"Only by becoming aware of the release of the data sets via the Twitter Account 'GOd' on Jan 3, 2019, could the BSI in a further analysis on Jan 4, 2019, connect this case and four other cases that the BSI became aware of during 2018," the Federal Office for Information Security (BSI) said in a statement, Reuters reported.

BSI president Arne Schoenbohm told broadcaster Phoenix that his team "had already held corresponding talks very early in December with certain Members of Parliament who were affected", and launched a "mobile incident response team".

The BSI has been slammed by politicians and critics for not notifying the Federal Crime Office till last Friday about the leak. News agency DPA and newspaper Bild reported that the security office was aware of the cyber intrusion as early as December.

Left-wing Die Linke party parliamentary head Dietmar Bartsch called the secrecy "completely unacceptable" and asked if the office had "something to hide".

Nearly 1,000 lawmakers and other prominent Germans, including rappers, journalists and Internet personalities, woke up last Friday

day to find links to their street and e-mail addresses, private chats from social media, bank account details and pictures of their children published on Twitter, in another major breach aimed at the country's political establishment.

Only the main opposition force in Parliament, the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, was excluded, reported The New York Times. All those attacked had a history of criticising the far-right, raising suspicion that the hacker or hackers were sympathetic to their agenda, though the authorities said they had no indication yet who was behind the attack.

The breach spread a fresh round of alarm in Germany, a country where citizens especially covet their privacy, and once again raised the disconcerting question of whether even the most vigilant and sophisticated individuals and governments can safeguard their computers. Even beyond Germany, the attack fit into a building pattern of breaches with the seeming aim of shaking confidence in the political establishment or undermining important players in it.

Cyber security experts said the hacker or hackers appeared to have taken considerable effort to collect and spread the looted information across different servers in an attempt to make tracing them and taking down the data more difficult.

Dr Merkel's government has vowed a thorough investigation.

As the country's main cyber security defence team called a crisis meeting to coordinate with domestic and foreign intelligence agencies early last Friday, Twitter took down the accounts used by the hacker calling himself GOd, which had been broadcasting links to the information since early last month.



Foreign ministers from 12 Latin American countries and Canada meeting in Lima last Friday said their governments will not accept Mr Nicolas Maduro as Venezuela's President when he is sworn in this week. PHOTO: REUTERS

Maduro's govt faces rejection by majority of Lima Group nations

LIMA (Peru) • Foreign ministers from 12 Latin American countries and Canada have said their governments will not accept Mr Nicolas Maduro as Venezuela's President when he is sworn in for a second six-year term this week.

The 14-member Lima Group – with the exception of Mexico – said last Friday it would not grant recognition to Mr Maduro's hardline socialist government, after meeting in the Peruvian capital to discuss ways to step up international pressure on the regime, which has presided over the oil-rich country's economic collapse.

Peru's Foreign Minister Nestor Popolizio said the group had delivered "a strong political message" ahead of Mr Maduro's inauguration on Jan 10.

Mr Maduro was re-elected last May 20 in a ballot boycotted by the main opposition parties and widely condemned by the international community, including the United States which called it a "sham".

"The main message is undoubtedly the non-recognition of the Venezuelan regime's new term," Mr Popolizio told reporters.

"It is very important that the Lima Group has issued this statement to continue exerting pressure with a view to the restoration of democracy in Venezuela," the Peru-



EXERTING PRESSURE

It is very important that the Lima Group has issued this statement to continue exerting pressure with a view to the restoration of democracy in Venezuela.

“

PERU'S FOREIGN MINISTER NESTOR POPOLIZIO, on the Lima Group's rejection of Mr Nicolas Maduro (above) as Venezuela's President.

of the assembly and to temporarily transfer power until new elections are held," Mr Popolizio said.

Venezuela hit back at the Lima Group, accusing it of fomenting a coup at the behest of the US, which has sanctioned Venezuelan officials and entities.

Caracas expressed its "great bewilderment at the extravagant declaration of a group of countries of the American continent which, after receiving instructions from the United States through a video conference, have agreed to encourage a coup d'état", according to a statement read by Venezuela's Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza.

The US, which is not a member of the group which was created after deadly anti-Maduro protests in 2017, participated in the meeting for the first time. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo commented by video conference from Washington.

The move coincides with a statement from Venezuela's opposition-dominated but toothless National Assembly, which said it would not recognise the "illegitimate" Mr Maduro when he takes office.

Separately, the secretary-general of the Organisation of American States, Mr Luis Almagro, has called on Twitter for the international community not to recognise Mr Maduro. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

vian minister said.

The Lima Group, of which Canada is a member, said Mr Maduro should temporarily transfer power to the opposition-controlled National Assembly until free elections can be held. "Nicolas Maduro is urged not to assume the presidency, to respect the powers

Weather

Singapore
34/24°C



Today

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.

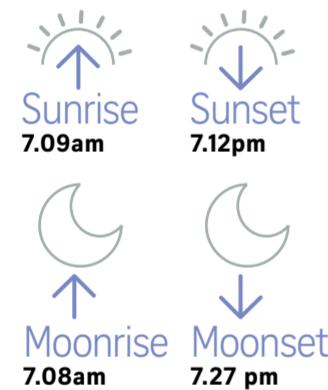
Outlook

Monday: Afternoon thunderstorms.

Tuesday: Periods of showers.

Air quality

PSI
62-70 (Moderate)
24-hour reading as of 5pm yesterday



North

Partly Cloudy

South

Thunderstorm

East

Partly Cloudy

West

Thunderstorm

Central

Partly Cloudy

Tides

Today: 12.13am (2.8m),
5.13am (1.7m), 10.54am (3m),
5.35pm (0.5m).

Desaru: 5.16am (1.9m),
10.01am (2.5m), 4.58pm (0.7m).

Port Dickson: 1.02am (0.3m),
6.52am (2.6m), 1.53pm (0.6m),
7.28pm (2.4m).

Mersing: 4.56am (2.1m),
8.47am (2.4m), 3.43pm (0.9m),
11.08pm (3.3m).

Tomorrow: 12.45am (2.8m),
5.45am (1.6m), 11.30am (3m),
6.07pm (0.5m).

Desaru: 12.26am (2.8m),
5.48am (1.9m), 10.35am (2.6m),
5.31pm (0.7m).

Port Dickson: 1.37am (0.3m),
7.23am (2.6m), 2.20pm (0.6m),
8.01pm (2.4m).

Mersing: 5.28am (2m),
9.32pm (2.4m), 4.22pm (0.9m),
11.42pm (3.3m).

Yellow vest protesters out in force across France



French "yellow vest" protesters with a sign reading "Injustice dictatorship stop. Free our comrades", as they rallied in Bordeaux yesterday. Over the past six weeks, the "yellow vest" demonstrators – named after the high-visibility jackets they wear – have repeatedly clashed with police in Paris and other cities across France. The protesters again marched through Paris and elsewhere yesterday to highlight their struggle to make ends meet, a day after President Emmanuel Macron hardened his stance against them. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Iran to send warships to Atlantic, nearer to US waters

LONDON • The Iranian navy will send warships to the Atlantic from March, a top commander has said, as the Islamic Republic seeks to increase the operating range of its naval forces to the backyard of the United States, its arch foe.

Iran sees the presence of US aircraft carriers in the Gulf as a security concern and its navy has sought to counter that by showing the flag near American waters. A flotilla will leave for the At-

lantic early in the Iranian new year, starting from March, Iran's naval deputy commander said last Friday.

"The Atlantic Ocean is far and the operation of the Iranian naval flotilla might take five months," Rear-Admiral Touraj Hassani was quoted as saying by the state news agency IRNA.

He said the Sahand, a newly built destroyer, would be one of the warships.

The Sahand has a flight deck for helicopters, and Iran says it is equipped with anti-aircraft and anti-ship guns, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles and has electronic warfare capabilities.

Rear-Adm. Hassani said last month that Iran would soon send two to three vessels on a mission to Venezuela.

A senior Iranian military official also said last month that the navy could sail in the Atlantic near US

waters since US aircraft carriers were allowed to move around in international waters near Iran.

The Iranian navy has extended its reach in recent years, launching vessels in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden to protect the country's ships from Somali pirates.

"By their continuous presence in international waters, Iranian naval forces aim to implement the orders of commander-in-chief of the

armed forces (Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei), wave the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran, thwart the Iranophobia plots, and secure shipping routes," Rear-Adm Hassani said.

A US-Iranian war of words has escalated since US President Donald Trump took Washington out of a world powers' nuclear deal with Iran last May, and reimposed sanctions on its banking and energy sectors. REUTERS

Actor Anupam Kher during a promotional event last month for the film *The Accidental Prime Minister*, in which he plays former premier Manmohan Singh.
PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Indian parties wage war of words over ex-PM's biopic

Congress slams BJP for plugging controversial Manmohan movie

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

It is not often that a political party plugs a movie on its rival.

But Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been actively encouraging viewers to watch *The Accidental Prime Minister*, a political drama on former prime minister Manmohan Singh who belongs to the rival Congress party.

The movie, which is due to be re-

leased on Jan 11, stars actor Anupam Kher as Dr Singh and is based on the 2014 tell-all book of the same title by Dr Singh's former adviser Sanjay Baru.

He had claimed, among other things, that it was then party president Sonia Gandhi – and not Dr Singh – who influenced key government decisions and Cabinet appointments.

Mrs Gandhi is the widow of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. Their son Rahul is now Congress president and is seen as a possible future prime minister if the party returns to power.

The Gandhi-Nehru family has given India three prime ministers including its first, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indira Gandhi.

Ahead of elections due in the next three to four months, when even the smallest issues will likely become politicised, the ruling BJP – which has targeted the Gandhi family and dynastic politics throughout its tenure – has grabbed the opportunity to embarrass its rival, and tweeted the movie's trailer, released on Dec 27.

"Dr Singh just a regent who was holding on to the PM's chair till the time he was ready? Watch the official trailer of *#TheAccidentalPrimeMinister*, based on an insider's account, releasing on 11 Jan!" tweeted BJP from its official handle.

BJP spokesman G.V.L. Narasimha Rao admitted it was unusual for the party to plug a movie.

"We generally don't do it but there is no guideline saying we shouldn't be promoting films," he said.

Dr Singh came to power in 2004 as a compromise candidate after Mrs Gandhi decided she did not want the job, following a vicious opposition campaign over her Italian roots.

The prime minister, a well-respected economist and a former finance minister who helped open up the economy and put India on the path to rapid growth, was in office for two terms.

But while there was fast economic growth and the strengthening of India on the global stage, controversies marked his tenure, including corruption scandals over preparations for the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

The movie's trailer, which is about three minutes long, opens with a disclaimer that "characters, events and incidents" in the book

FIGHTING BACK
...desperation & frustration in face of imminent defeat.

“

MR AMARINDERSINGH, Congress leader and Punjab Chief Minister, on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which has plugged *The Accidental Prime Minister*.

DISTRACTION TACTIC

They want to distract people's attention from the core issues of India like farmers' distress and unemployment.

“

MRS SATYAJEET TAMBE PATIL, the Youth Congress leader from Maharashtra, on BJP's alleged motives.

STRIVING FOR AUTHENTICITY

...an authentic political film, which talks of real people and real events.

“

MR VIJAY GUTTE, director of *The Accidental Prime Minister*, on his aim in making the movie.

have been "fictionalised for dramatisation".

It explores the dynamics between Dr Singh and Mrs Sonia Gandhi, who is shown as preparing the way for her son's ascension.

"Corruption scandals one after the other. In this atmosphere, how can Rahul take over?" Mrs Gandhi is shown telling Dr Singh in a scene.

Dr Singh has maintained silence over the film.

When contacted, Dr Baru said: "I was not involved in the making of the movie and have not seen it yet."

He said he only sold the rights to the film producer and had no role in the script or the movie.

The book, which came out in 2014 as the then ruling Congress was heading into an election drubbing, had also triggered political controversy, with Congress at the time denying Mrs Gandhi's interference in government.

Now, the movie is also attracting controversy, coming out just ahead of a general election and as the Congress is undergoing a resurgence, following election wins in the states of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, which were BJP strongholds.

The Congress, while deciding not to interfere in the release of the movie in states where it is in power, has nevertheless accused the BJP of propaganda.

Congress leader and Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh accused the BJP in a tweet of "desperation & frustration in face of imminent defeat" for promoting the movie.

The Youth Congress leader from Maharashtra, Mrs Satyajeet Tambe Patil, wrote a letter asking the producers for a preview but later withdrew it, calling it a "BJP-sponsored movie". "They want to distract people's attention from the core issues of India like farmers' distress and unemployment," he added.

The makers and cast of the movie have denied any political propaganda, with Kher, who is a well-known admirer and supporter of Mr Modi, saying it would not impact voters.

The actor told the media he had seen at least 100 hours of footage of Dr Singh to prepare for the role.

"I feel it's the most difficult role I have done in my life because Dr Manmohan Singh is known by everybody and even today, he is so active. He is more vocal now than he was in 2014," he added.

The film's director Vijay Gutte told the Indian media the aim was to make "an authentic political film, which talks of real people and real events".

He has also thanked BJP leader Subramanian Swamy for his positive feedback.

The movie has attracted legal action, with lawyer Sudhir Kumar Ojha filing a complaint in court, in his personal capacity, against the lampooning of public figures.

He is the leader of the Rashtriya Lok Samta Party, which recently entered into an alliance with the Congress.

The complaint was lodged last Wednesday against Kher and others associated with the film.

A court will decide on Tuesday if there is merit in the complaint.

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dian journalism today".

Mr Amit Malviya, the social media head of the BJP, retaliated with its own series of interviews, seemingly favourable to Mr Gandhi, his mother Sonia Gandhi and even other opposition leaders. It released it with the comment: "Dear Rahul Gandhi, let me show you what 'pliable' means... Enjoy."

Nirmala Ganapathy



Congress president Rahul Gandhi called a journalist who interviewed Prime Minister Narendra Modi "pliable".
PHOTO: REUTERS

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Sport



Fast return

Short track speed skater Lucas Ng wins 500m on his comeback after long break.

A25

TOP CLUBS UNLIKELY TO SPLASH OUT IN WINDOW

Most mindful of the risks of not getting value but many may resort to loan deals

LONDON • Chelsea kicked off the English Premier League's January transfer window on Wednesday with the £58 million (\$100 million) signing of Christian Pulisic from Borussia Dortmund, but history has suggested that this is likely to be the exception for top clubs.

Loan signings are likely to dominate this transfer season, although this is also "the window for the desperate" for the relegation-threatened clubs, as one leading football agent terms it.

Only 37 of the 178 players leaving EPL clubs last January moved permanently and close to one in every three of the incoming signings in the top flight, a ratio that for the second successive year was twice as high as in the summer, joined on a temporary basis.

A year ago, unfinished business and acrimony from the preceding summer sparked off a domino effect, with Philippe Coutinho, Virgil van Dijk, Alexis Sanchez and Ross Barkley finally getting their wish to leave.

This time round, it seems unlikely that clubs will match the record £431 million committed last year, with most of the top six teams indicating that they have no plans for big signings this month.

Manchester United will hold fire until they know the identity of their next permanent manager and might only sell fringe players.

Champions Manchester City have to play catch-up on leaders Liverpool and have looked vulnerable in the absence of Fernandinho recently. But Pep Guardiola emphasised there will be no spending: "This is the third time I answered that question. No news is good news, so no."

It could be a bluff. In the past two January windows, they have bought Aymeric Laporte for £57 million and, the previous year, Gabriel Jesus for £27 million.

With Tottenham needing to provide a sweetener for a manager attracting attention, there is an opportunity for judicious reinforcement. Whether Spurs sign anyone could be taken as a clue to the future of Mauricio Pochettino as manager beyond the end of the season.

Spurs are under pressure to act but, if they satisfy his wish to freshen up the dressing room, the arrivals may not be wanted by a new manager should he still leave.

City and Chelsea also face the possibility of a transfer ban over the signing of junior players, which could affect thinking.

In general, though, all clubs are mindful of the pitfalls of spending big money this month.

Chelsea's decision to commit £50 million to bring in Fernando Torres from Liverpool eight years ago turned out to be such an ill-advised move that it is still cited by those nervous about making big-money signings in January.

It looks likely to be a more traditional one in which teams near the bottom are most active but face the frustrations of buying in a seller's market. As one agent said: "It will be only those clubs who are desperate who try to deal, and the big clubs will act only if a player unexpectedly becomes available."

Another said that it was mainly second-tier players who are likely to be available and even struggling clubs may not take the plunge until the final days of the window.

The case may be different for clubs who feel they are in a false position and could push up the table with help. Crystal Palace are one, with chairman Steve Parish noting the problems of availability, afford-



ability and the prospect of being taken advantage of.

"January is a pretty terrible window to get value," he said. "The deals are not there now."

"It is difficult if people know you need that player and there is no other solution."

A popular solution is loan deals.

Halfway through the season is normally short-term fix territory rather than a buyer's market, which partly explains the prevalence of loans.

Yet arguably the biggest factor is the sheer number of professionals that EPL clubs have on their books these days and the need to find regular first-team football for as many as possible while recouping a bit of money at the same time.

Some will be high-profile and out of favour – such as Jermain Defoe, who has just joined Rangers on loan from Bournemouth; Liverpool's Nathaniel Clyne, who has signed for Eddie Howe's side until the end of the season; and Chelsea's Gary Cahill, who may join Fulham.

The majority, though, will be younger players who are some way off the first team and are, in the eyes of senior figures at their clubs, neither developing in a competitive environment by playing Under-23 football nor increasing their value.

Business has already been brisk this time around and, as the days tick by, it will be interesting to see what becomes of players such as Everton's Morgan Schneiderlin, Vincent Janssen at Spurs and Chelsea's Danny Drinkwater, all of whom cost a fair few quid and could do with a new home – temporary or otherwise – to revive their careers.



PHOTOS: REUTERS, AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

Going somewhere?

DIVOCK ORIGI (LIVERPOOL)

The Belgian forward has barely played for the Reds this season, featuring in just two league games and a total of 72 minutes, although he did come off the bench to score a late winner in the 1-0 victory over Everton last month.

Besides his goal, he also provided an assist during the 3-1 win over Burnley.

Origi, who spent last season on loan in the Bundesliga with Wolfsburg, is reportedly frustrated at a lack of playing time at Anfield and is looking to move on. His suitors include the likes of Wolves, Celtic, Schalke and Lille.

AARON RAMSEY (ARSENAL)

Arsenal have decided to withdraw the new contract they had put on the table for the Welshman and he will be free to discuss terms with overseas clubs this month.

Juventus and German Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich are rumoured to be interested, with reports saying the midfielder has already signed a pre-contract with the Italian champions.

Arsenal may also be tempted to cash in should they receive a substantial offer from a Premier League rival. Manager Unai Emery has insisted there is no prospect of reopening talks for a new deal but could change his mind should Mesut Ozil leave.

VICTOR MOSES (CHELSEA)

Moses is clearly not part of manager Maurizio Sarri's plans, having featured for a mere 28 minutes in the Premier League this season, and Chelsea are willing to let him leave.

Having signed a contract until 2021 last year, the Nigeria international is valued at £12 million (\$S20.7 million) and a return to Crystal Palace, where he came through their academy, appears most likely.

Wolves and West Ham have also been linked, but the 28-year-old should be key to provide some much-needed support to Wilfried Zaha at Selhurst Park.

four-digit draw

Jan 05 2019

First ▶ 5845

Second ▶ 5986

Third ▶ 4900

STARTERS

0733 1117 1348
3883 3917 4115
5506 6227 7592
9705

CONSOLATIONS

1102 1368 3519
3746 3749 4516
4669 6004 6192
6796

THE TIMES, LONDON, THE GUARDIAN



Juan Mata being fouled against Reading in the FA Cup third round at Old Trafford. He scored United's opener from the spot kick given by the video assistant referee. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

OLE-OLE-OLE-OLE-OLE, NOW BRING ON SPURS

Interim manager equals Busby's record with reserves, with goals from Mata and Lukaku

FA CUP

Manchester United 2
Reading 0

LONDON • Ole Gunnar Solskjær has been a breath of fresh air the past month, not only because Manchester United are winning games again, but also because of his humility. Following yesterday's 2-0 FA Cup third-round win over Reading at home, the caretaker boss has clinched his fifth victory from his opening five games – equaling the legendary manager Matt Busby's

non-war-time club record.

It was a dream start for the Norwegian, but not once did he mention the record immediately after the win. It was all about looking ahead to the players' training camp in Dubai and the next Premier League match against Tottenham.

It was, in essence, all about the collective rather than the individual, and he also admitted that the win did not come easy even against a Championship side.

"Two-nil, a clean sheet again, and I have to say they made it tough for us. And probably I made it tough for us, because you know when you make nine changes, it's never easy for a team that's never played together. So I'm delighted we're in the next round," he said.

"We learnt a lot. We know we need some fitness work (in Dubai), and to work on relations.

"If we repeat that performance at Wembley (against Spurs), we won't have a clean sheet or any points."

United were hardly the well-oiled machine yesterday, playing with their second-string players.

Solskjær kept only Phil Jones and Juan Mata from the team who started the 2-0 win over Newcastle and the disjointed display proved his point that he made it difficult.

Reading enjoyed enough possession early on to have the hosts defending deep though, when United clicked into gear, they carried a potent threat.

They were soon ahead courtesy of the video assistant referee. As

Juan Mata touched the ball off to Fred, Omar Richards took the Spaniard down. Fred found the net but was ruled offside but, after a rather lengthy consultation, the video official gave a penalty that Mata dispatched with aplomb.

The second goal came in first-half stoppage time. Alexis Sanchez threaded a pass to Romelu Lukaku and the centre forward left Reading goalkeeper Anssi Jaakkola a spectator and slotted home.

It was Sanchez's second assist in two games, but he was forced to be taken off due to what seemed to be a slight hamstring injury midway through the second half.

What followed prompted some laughs on social media when he accidentally sat on Solskjær's seat when the manager was at the touchline. The Norwegian returned, laughed and gave Sanchez a light pat on the back before "kicking him out".

"Sitting on the gaffer's seat... he wouldn't have got away so lightly if it had been (Alex) Ferguson," wrote one user. "Sanchez out of position yet again," said another.

Solskjær's first big test will come at Tottenham next Sunday and it remains to be seen if he will still be a happy man at the end of that game. THE GUARDIAN

13

Goals Romelu Lukaku has scored in his last 14 FA Cup appearances, including netting six in seven for Manchester United.

HeartOfFootball

Bernardo another example that size doesn't matter



Rob Hughes

In the English playground of my youth we had a saying, "pick on someone your own size". I was reminded of that on Thursday night when Bernardo Silva, all 1.73m, 64kg of him, outran, outfought and often outmanoeuvred the Liverpool midfield selected for its industry, its intensity, its willingness to run opponents to submission.

Bernardo might not have started if Kevin de Bruyne had been match fit. Yet, after his performance at the heart of the Man City midfield, he grabbed hold of Virgil van Dijk and, almost on tiptoes so that he could look the colossus in the eyes, Bernardo tried to console the big man after Liverpool's first Premier League loss of the season.

Some distance away, City's coach Pep Guardiola was saying of Bernardo: "He's the smallest one. He showed again that you don't need size. Bernardo even fought van Dijk in the air! I haven't seen a performance like this in a long time – not just with the ball – he's precise, he's clean, he's clever."

History tells us that Guardiola has a liking for little men. Lionel Messi, Andres Iniesta and Xavi Hernandez, big in talent but challenged in centimetres, ran his wonderful Barcelona side. And Philipp Lahm, just about nudging 1.7m, was the architect of Pep's Bayern Munich.

With Guardiola, a player's quality, and his willingness to

adapt, to move, to read the game, overshadows physicality. Bernardo (and the magical mate David Silva) would come very close to the average height in Singapore. In England or Germany, the average male stands taller at 1.77m or 1.78m. And even in the Netherlands, where 1.83m is average, van Dijk's 1.93m and 92kg is still a big package.

Big, and this season the rock of a Liverpool defence so mean that, until Thursday in Manchester, it was regarded as strong at the back as Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane were exciting up front.

Breaking that symmetry, cracking Liverpool's 20-game unbeaten start in the EPL, required City to be at their most collective and committed.

It wasn't 'classical football. But it was a game for grown-ups, for soldiers straining nerve and sinew, engaging every ounce of effort just to stay in the contest.

This, remember, is England where the Christmas and New Year schedule packs in five games (including the FA Cup) for the clubs, taking them down to the bare bones of stamina and mental concentration.

The fixture-list planners have a cruel sense of humour, asking players (most of whom are foreign and not steeped in English winter rituals) to churn out top-quality games on a three-day turnaround

to mend bodies and massage muscles.

This, then, is where Bernardo was truly exceptional against Liverpool.

He said beforehand that it needed strength of character to get City back in the swing, after their surprising defeats by Crystal Palace and Leicester in December.

With Fernandinho and David Silva both rushed back after injury, and with de Bruyne struggling to find his rhythm after serious knee injury, it required leadership and self-sacrifice to go toe-to-toe with the Reds.

Bernardo surpassed requirements. Known for his technical quality rather than marathon running, the former Benfica and Monaco man covered 13.7km at the Etihad. It was

box-to-box running the way that Bryan Robson was famous for, the way that N'Golo Kante tirelessly attempts.

But as Guardiola said, Bernardo was precise, clean and clever. His run and pass down the left set up the opening goal for Sergio Aguero – though one has to say that only Aguero, with his instinctive predatory eye for a chance, would have turned Bernardo's short cross into a reptilian swivel and an instinctive strike past goalkeeper Alisson.

Aguero, incidentally, is another "short" man. Short, but quick, deadly, and like the rest of City on Thursday, prepared to run beyond reasonable expectation to put a dent in Liverpool's lead, and to put life back into the title race.

I harp on about size only because, well, I have heard so often in Asia that men of a certain stature start handicapped in global soccer.

I stopped believing that when I first saw Garrincha, the "Little Bird" of Pele's Brazil, on the wing. And then in the 1970s, witnessing the bewitching 1.65m, 58kg "Great Dane" Allan Simonsen of Borussia Monchengladbach.

It was thrilling then, and it is now, to acknowledge that skill outwits brawn all day long.

stsports@sph.com.sg

MAN CITY v ROTHERHAM

Singtel TV Ch11, 9.55pm

Kane cameo is 'respect' for paying home fans

LONDON • While the introduction of Harry Kane could be seen as unnecessary given that Tottenham were six goals up in their 7-0 FA Cup win, Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino suggested he did so to be fair to the Tranmere Rovers home supporters who had turned up on a cold night.

A hat-trick from Fernando Llorente, two goals from Serge Aurier, and a strike each from Kane and Son Heung-min saw Tottenham comfortably through to the fourth round of the competition.

The League Two side managed to live with their illustrious Premier League opponents for most of the first half but were outclassed after the interval.

Kane came on in the 75th minute and added a seventh goal just seven minutes later. He took his tally for the season to 19 and brought Spurs a 33rd goal in 33 days, as well as their biggest away win ever in the FA Cup.

"It was the plan to give Harry Kane 15-20 minutes to play, he always wants to play. It is important too for the fans here and the opponents to enjoy Harry Kane, he's an icon England and not everyone can have the opportunity to see him," Pochettino said.

"It was important to show some respect to the people who are here, it was very nice for everyone.

"Some of the people who paid money to see the game probably did so in the hope they might see Harry Kane in action."

Tottenham have not won the FA Cup since 1991 and silverware has also been in short supply since, with the League Cup victory in 2008 their most recent trophy.

Following the win, Spurs will welcome Chelsea to Wembley in the first leg of the League Cup semi-finals on Tuesday and Pochettino was happy that the victory will keep their momentum going.

"It was a very professional performance. I'm very pleased," he said. "I'm happy because we kept our level and we keep going in the competition."

Tranmere manager Micky Mellon acknowledged his team, who won promotion to League Two from the fifth-tier National League last term, were outclassed by a side who are third in the top flight.

"They are a fantastic football team with outrageously good players," he said. "Sometimes you have to put your hands up and say they were brilliant."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS, THE GUARDIAN

ENGLISH FA CUP

3RD RD (SELECTED)

YESTERDAY

Bournemouth 1 Brighton 3

Burnley 1 Barnsley 0

Chelsea 2 Nottingham Forest 0

Derby 2 Southampton 2

Everton 2 Lincoln 1

Gillingham 1 Cardiff 0

Man United 2 Reading 0

West Ham 2 Birmingham 0

Blackpool v Arsenal

Late kick-off

TODAY

Man City v Rotherham

Ch11, 9.55pm

Newport v Leicester

Ch11, tomorrow, 12.25am

Woking v Watford

Ch12, 9.55pm

Fulham v Oldham

Ch13, 9.55pm

TOMORROW

Wolves v Liverpool

Ch11, Tuesday, 3.40am

All on Singtel TV

I harp on about size only because, well, I have heard so often in Asia that men of a certain stature start handicapped in global soccer.

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It was thrilling then, and it is now, to acknowledge that skill outwits brawn all day long.

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MAN CITY v ROTHERHAM

Singtel TV Ch11, 9.55pm



Singapore's Lucas Ng staying ahead of Australian Luke Cullen to win the SEA Open Short Track Trophy men's 500m, after the positions were reversed in the 1,500m. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

LONG DOWNTIME BUT NG STILL WINS 500M

Speed skater also earns silver in 1,500m at SEA Open Trophy; Goh qualifies for Games

Nicole Chia

Short track speed skater Lucas Ng, 30, had neither intended to compete at this weekend's SEA Open Short Track Trophy, nor had he expected much from his races.

He had trained only for a month, during which his main focus was to regain his fitness so that he could last the duration of the 1,500m and

500m races.

On the first day of the competition yesterday at The Rink@JCube, he was second in the 1,500m and won the 500m by 0.003sec.

Ng, who raised both arms and whooped in joy after being announced as the winner, told The Sunday Times he had not expected to be that fast in his first competition after a nine-month break.

He clocked 45.845sec in the

500m and 2min 54.295sec in the 1,500m – compared to 44.489sec and 2:27.322 at his last tournament, the ISU World Short Track Championships last March.

After coming in second to Australia's Luke Cullen (2:54.161) in the 1,500m, the pair faced off again in the 500m. Ng took the early lead, with Cullen in close pursuit, and he won by a photo-finish.

"I could feel he was neck and neck with me and at the very last corner. I knew there was only one thing I could do – stick close to the block so that I cover a shorter distance to the finish line," said the Sin-

gaporean, who raised funds for rescue dogs and helped out with his brother's event-management business during his nine-month break.

"When it comes to a close race like this, there's only one thing on your mind: keep pushing, keep going and don't look back."

Though he narrowly missed the SEA Games qualifying mark of 45.778, pegged to the bronze medal time at Kuala Lumpur 2017, Ng hopes the other criteria, which includes his regional ranking, put him in good stead to compete this year in the Philippines.

Winter sports will feature at the

biennial Games for the second straight edition, and he said he will see what he needs to do in order to be selected before planning his other competitions for the year.

Ng, who won two silvers in the 1,000m and 3,000m relay at the 2017 Games, added: "The SEA Games is one of the biggest events we have in the region, and to represent the country there is an honour so I'm working towards that."

Teammate Cheyenne Goh, who won the women's 1,500m and 500m yesterday, met the Games' 500m qualifying mark with her 48.691sec.

The 19-year-old, who took part at Pyeongchang 2018 as Singapore's maiden Winter Olympics representative, won two silvers and a bronze in 2017 and hopes to win another medal this year.

"Ideally, I'd like to win gold," added Goh, who will compete in the 1,000m today. "Having competed (at the SEA Games) once, I know what it's like and I know what's coming, I can prepare and try to do as well as I can."

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Australians hit by storm and Indian spinners

SYDNEY • Australia's batting woes returned on the Day 3 of the fourth Test yesterday, with the hosts slumping to 236 for six when bad light and rain brought an early end to their response to India's mammoth first-innings tally.

The tourists, who declared on 622-7 late on Friday, need only a draw to claim a first series win Down Under and Australia's hopes of salvaging anything faded with the loss of five wickets after lunch.

Marcus Harris, Marnus Labuschagne, Shaun Marsh and Travis Head were all out before captain Tim Paine followed shortly after the tea break. Peter Handscomb, unbeaten on 28, and fast bowler Pat Cummins, who had made 25, were at the crease when bad light stopped play at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

A storm lashed the venue for the final hour of scheduled play and proceedings will resume 30 minutes early at 10am local time today.

Most of the Australian batsmen made starts, but only opener Harris was able to get past the half-century mark, his 79 the highest score by the hosts in a four-match series in which India have pillaged five centuries. The left-hander showed plenty of intent but, just when it seemed he could be heading for a maiden Test ton, he played the ball onto his own stumps off the bowling of Ravindra Jadeja.

"I was disappointed not to get a hundred but it was good to spend some time in the middle," Harris said.

"I'd been playing positively against the spinners."

India's pace attack played the leading role in victories in Adelaide and Melbourne, but it was the spinners who did most of the damage yesterday.

Jadeja (2-62) also accounted for the experienced Marsh (eight), who left his bat hanging to give Ajinkya Rahane the simplest of catches. Rahane had to work harder for the catch that dismissed Labuschagne for 38 off the bowling of Mohammed Shami.

"I feel we are the best in the world when it comes to fielding," left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav said.

"We are still learning." REUTERS

AUSTRALIA VS INDIA

4th Test, day 4: Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 7am



Switzerland's Roger Federer and his mixed doubles partner Belinda Bencic with the Hopman Cup, after defeating Germany's Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber in yesterday's final. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

Federer's record 3rd Hopman Cup

PERTH • Roger Federer has become the most successful player in Hopman Cup history, after leading Switzerland to a 2-1 win in an enthralling final of the mixed teams tournament in Perth yesterday.

In what is likely the final edition of the tournament, the best was saved for last as Federer became the first player to win three Hopman Cups, teaming with Belinda Bencic for the duo's second consecutive title.

For the second year in a row, the Swiss beat the German pairing of Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber by claiming a deciding mixed doubles match.

It was Switzerland's fourth title

overall, behind only the United States with six. Federer, 37, first won the Hopman Cup back in 2001 when he teamed with Martina Hingis.

He gave the Swiss the early ascendancy with a 6-4, 6-2 win against Zverev, before Kerber squared the tie by beating a dogged Belinda Bencic 6-4, 7-6 (8-6) to set up the mixed-doubles decider.

Federer was a dominant figure in the doubles match as the Swiss claimed the abbreviated format 4-0, 1-4, 4-3 (5-4) to clinch the title.

In the men's singles, Federer bounced back from a November loss to Zverev in London to beat

it a clean sweep of his singles matches in Perth for the second year running, less than two weeks before he defends his Australian Open title.

"I am happy I was able to maintain the good, high quality tennis I showed all week," he said.

"It is good to finish on a singles performance like this, I was able to come up with some good serve and volley and it all worked out today."

World No. 2 Kerber appeared set for an easy win in her singles match against Bencic, taking the first set. But the Swiss never gave up and forced a tie-break in the second.

Kerber praised Bencic's tenacity, saying she was always a determined opponent.

"She was fighting until the last one (point)," the German said.

Meanwhile, Novak Djokovic suffered a shock Qatar Open semi-final loss to Roberto Bautista Agut 6-3, 6-7 (6-8), 6-4. It was the Serb's first defeat of the season.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SportsWorld

Guardiola warned for touchline rant

LONDON • Pep Guardiola has been warned by the Football Association over his behaviour, after the Manchester City manager launched into a touchline rant during the 2-1 victory against Liverpool.

Guardiola threw his scarf to the ground and shouted at fourth official Martin Atkinson, after a decision went against City in the second half on Thursday. It is his first warning and the decision was posted on the FA website, which also states that any manager receiving four such warnings must serve a touchline ban.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Maradona out of hospital, no danger

BUENOS AIRES • Argentinian football great Diego Maradona was discharged from hospital after being admitted earlier on Friday with internal bleeding in the stomach, which was discovered during routine examinations, his daughter Dalma said.

A source close to the family also told Reuters the problem was not serious and that the former Boca Juniors, Napoli and Barcelona midfielder, who famously led his country to the 1986 World Cup title, was not in any danger. REUTERS

James will be out at least 3 more games

LOS ANGELES • National Basketball Association superstar LeBron James, who has already missed four games with a strained left groin, will miss at least three more before being re-evaluated, the Los Angeles Lakers announced on Friday.

James suffered the injury on Dec 25 when the Lakers beat Golden State 127-101.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL Malaysia Dragons v HK Eastern (StarHub TV Ch201, 2.30pm), Formosa Dreamers v S'pore Slingers (3pm), Saigon Heat v Mono Vampire (5pm), Alab Pilipinas v Zuhai Wolf Warriors (8pm) – StarHub TV Ch202.

CRICKET

4th & final Test Australia v India: Day 4 (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 7am).

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group B: Australia v Jordan (6.50pm), Syria v Palestine (11.50pm). Group A: Thailand v India (9.20pm) – Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208. English FA Cup 3rd rd: Man City v Rotherham (9.55pm), Newport County v Leicester (tomorrow, 12.25am) – Singtel TV Ch111. Woking v Watford (Ch112, 9.55pm). Fulham v Oldham Athletic (Ch113, 9.55pm). Spanish LaLiga Eibar v Villarreal (6.55pm), Sevilla v Atletico (tomorrow, 1.25am), Getafe v Barcelona (tomorrow, 3.40am) – StarHub Ch213.

TENNIS

ATP/WTA Brisbane International Day 7: Men's singles final (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 5pm).

TOMORROW

CRICKET

4th & final Test Australia v India: Day 5 (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 7.30am) – if needed.

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group C: China v Kyrgyzstan (6.50pm), South Korea v Philippines (9.20pm). Group D: Iran v Yemen (11.50pm) – Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208. English FA Cup 3rd rd: Wolves v Liverpool (Singtel TV Ch111, Tuesday, 3.40am). Spanish LaLiga Celta v Bilbao (StarHub Ch213, Tuesday, 3.55am).

TENNIS

World Tennis Challenge Day 1 (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 4pm).

BUCKS DOWN HAWKS WITH QUICK START

NBA leaders give coach huge win over former side as they ready for big clash with Raptors

MILWAUKEE (Wisconsin) • The Milwaukee Bucks knew that it was unwise to exert themselves too much on Friday, with Eastern Conference rivals Toronto visiting the next night.

The plan was to win fast, and rest early. They did exactly that, leading the Atlanta Hawks 43-14 after just the first quarter in their National Basketball Association game.

All five Milwaukee starters scored in double figures and the Bucks presented coach Mike Budenholzer with a resounding win over his former team, thumping the Hawks 144-112 and improving to a league-leading 27-10.

"Obviously, the first quarter (we) threw a big punch on both ends of the court," he said. "I thought the effort was great. To have that kind of lead and set the tone, the starters were phenomenal."

The Bucks got 19 points each from Khris Middleton and Atlanta native Malcolm Brogdon, 16 points

from Giannis Antetokounmpo, 14 from Eric Bledsoe and 10 from Brook Lopez. None of the starters played more than 22 minutes.

It was the first time Budenholzer faced the Hawks, the team he coached for five seasons before they agreed to part ways last spring.

The win, the fifth straight for Milwaukee, moved them into first place in the Eastern Conference, a half-game ahead of the Toronto Raptors. Milwaukee have also won nine of their past 10 games.

Antetokounmpo played just 19½ minutes but picked up his 25th double-double of the season by adding 10 assists. He also had eight rebounds and shot 6-of-8 from the floor. Middleton was 7-of-8 and Brogdon managed 6-of-9 as the Bucks shot 55 per cent from the floor (55-of-100).

Milwaukee also got 12 points from George Hill, 11 from Tony Snell and 10 from Ersan Ilyasova and matched their season high for points, equaling the score against Sacramento on Nov 4.

"It was huge," Middleton said. "We get off to a great start, set the tone early and keep it going

whole game. Hopefully it can prepare us for tomorrow."

"It's neck-and-neck (with the Raptors) right now. But we try to keep the focus on us. It's a long season. We're not complacent with where we're at right now. We still can be better in some areas so we're going to stay hungry."

Toronto (28-12), meanwhile, are coming off a road loss to San Antonio on Thursday and already have lost the first two games against Milwaukee this season.

Atlanta (11-27) have now lost their third straight game following Friday's defeat at the Fiserv Forum.

The Hawks got 19 points from DeAndre' Bembry, 14 points from DeWayne Dedmon, 12 points and eight rebounds from Alex Len, and 12 points and seven rebounds from John Collins.

"They're the No. 1 team in the league right now," Hawks coach Lloyd Pierce said.

"They're playing with an edge and we saw that tonight."

"We just didn't have it. That's part of our growing pains and part of our growth, to understand that you have to go through these things." REUTERS

Bucks centre Brook Lopez taking a shot as Hawks guard Daniel Hamilton (left) and forward John Collins defend, while forward Giannis Antetokounmpo gives support. The Bucks won 144-112 at the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Friday night. PHOTO: REUTERS

+29

The Bucks' +29 differential was the largest by any team in the first quarter this season. They scored 43 points, their most in a first quarter this season, against the Hawks, whose 14 points were their fewest in a first quarter this term.



New mindset helps Woodland lead

MAUI • Gary Woodland admitted that he used to come to the Tournament of Champions to "enjoy the views" and the Maui life.

This time, though, he has a different mindset. The 34-year-old American was more aggressive and fired his second straight six-under 67 to grab a three-shot halfway lead.

Woodland, seeking his fourth PGA Tour win, used a streak of five consecutive birdies, beginning at the No. 11, to reach 12-under 134.

World No. 8 Rory McIlroy (68), Bryson DeChambeau (68) and first-round leader Kevin Tway (71) are tied for second at nine under.

"I've had that (relaxed) mindset a couple times that I've been here,

not prepared, excited to be here," Woodland said. "But I knew I wanted to be prepared coming in. I have a little different mindset this week, playing a little more aggressive, trying to contend and win instead of just enjoying the views out here, which I've done in the past."

The American went on a roll last summer, finishing in the top 12 in six out of seven starts globally.

But he has failed to convert each of his previous four 36-hole leads into victories. His last win came at last February's Phoenix Open.

McIlroy is not the only former Major winner still in the hunt, as Justin Thomas is tied for sixth after posting a one-under 72.

Rookie Cameron Champ (68) and Xander Schauffele (67) are keeping Thomas company at seven under, five adrift of Woodland.

"I stayed patient," McIlroy said.

"The front nine's the tough nine on this golf course, and I had a couple opportunities, but I just thought if I could get through that first nine under par, I would have a few chances on the back nine."

"And thankfully I was able to take advantage."

Defending champion Dustin Johnson, who shot 74 and slipped seven strokes behind the lead, said he did not blame a marshal for his role in incurring a two-stroke penalty for hitting the wrong ball.

He put his tee shot into a penalty area, the new terminology used for a hazard under changes to golf's rules implemented at the start of the year, at the par-four fourth.

The world No. 3 was directed by a marshal towards a ball in the long tropical grass and a quick glance confirmed it had a logo of the brand he plays. He then hacked the ball back into play, only to stumble upon his ball a few yards further on, in short rough.

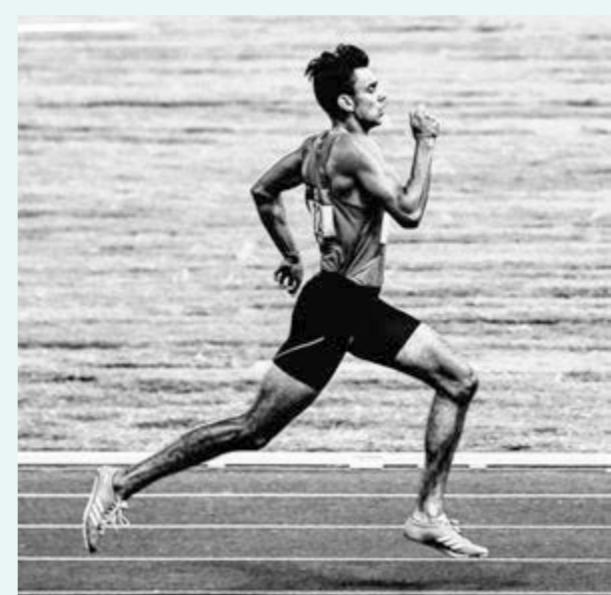
"Obviously it was my fault," he said. "There was a ball right there and it was a TaylorMade. I could see the logo on the side so, obviously, I just assumed it was mine." AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

Weekly tweetbits



SAY WHAT?

Sprint queen Shanti Pereira has "so much to look forward to and so much to be thankful for :)"



SAY WHAT?

400m runner Zubin Muncherji looks forward to his year on the track: "2018 was truly a year of learning to trust myself and the process. Grateful for all opportunities I've been blessed with and so ready to continue chasing that dream in 2019 #TrackNation"



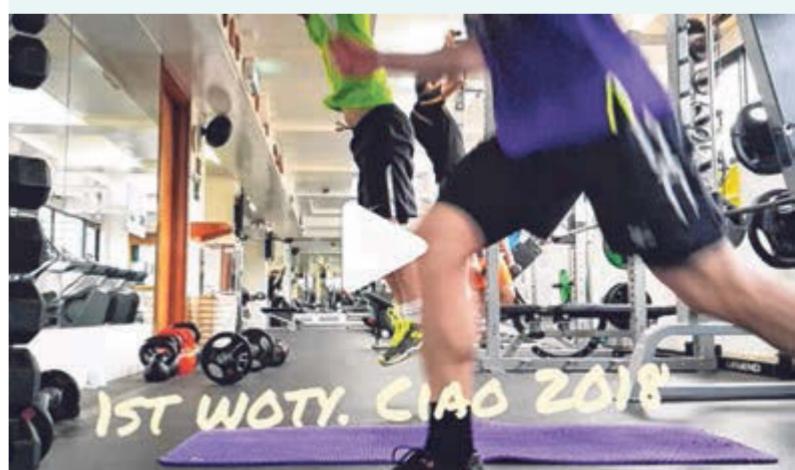
SAY WHAT?

Boxer Muhamad Ridhwan's hope for success: "As 2018 draws to a close, I will no longer wish you more success. You've had so much already. It should be mine this coming year so happy new year to me! But seriously, thank you all for everything. #thechosenwan"



SAY WHAT?

Footballer Baihakki Khaizan recalls some famous words: "What is destined will reach you, even if it be underneath two mountains. What is not destined will not reach you, even if it be between your two lips." #newyear2019 #baihakkifamily"



SAY WHAT?

Squash players Chua Man Tong and Samuel Kang get down to "busting those Xmas fats & bringing dem gains! Watch till the end if you want to see Singapore's no.1 @kangsamuel in fine form!" WATCH: goo.gl/F6nwk8

PHOTOS: INSTAGRAM/V_SHANTIPEREIRA, MRSPEEDTASTIC, TCW.LEGENDS, IAM.BAIHAKKI, CHUAMANTONG

DARTS PROS DIVIDED OVER DISTRACTIONS

Some prefer quieter atmosphere but others say enthusiastic fans needed to draw sponsors

David Lee

The fans growled "ohhhhh" in unison, building up to a crescendo as Paul Lim launched his outshot.

Much like the "yam seng" wedding toast, such anticipation is growing into a "tradition" for the Singapore darts ace these days. At the Dec 13 to Jan 1 PDC World Darts Championship in London, for instance, he was also serenaded with a chant familiar to football fans.

"Ole, ole, ole, ole, Paul Lim, Paul Lim," the fans at Alexandra Palace sang in his first-round 3-1 defeat by Ross Smith in the Professional Darts Corporation's premier event.

Such enthusiasm by fans is increasingly common in recent years, leading to divided opinions between traditionalists, who want a return to darts' more muted days, and those who say the sport must evolve to entertain fans, or risk losing audiences and the big bucks that come with such growth.

Singapore's leading darters, Paul and Harith Lim who are not related, are themselves split on the issue. They compete on the PDC Asian

Tour and Dartslive electronic darts circuit and stunned Scottish top seeds Gary Anderson and Peter Wright 5-2 in the first round of the 2017 World Cup of Darts.

Paul, 64, prefers more decorum, even if he has learnt how to deal with the rowdiness.

While he appreciates the support and that the atmosphere "makes for good TV", he said: "There is no right or wrong, only personal preference. I remember how the hall was silent when players were at the oche in the early days.

"But now, fans are allowed to drink and they want to have fun. It is just like a football or basketball match, where the crowds are encouraged to cheer or whistle."

"It is still rather quiet at World Darts Federation events."

"But this is the way PDC events are heading and there is no turning back now. Maybe for other non-PDC major tournaments, there could be certain rules about decorum. But short of throwing people out, it would be hard to police."

The formula of sports and entertainment seems to make sense for darts. PDC had a total of £11 million

(\$19 million) in prize money for all its competitions in 2017, five times more than the amount in 2007. Some 1.4 million people in Britain and 2.7 million in Germany watched the 2017 World Championship final while the prize purse hit a record £2.5 million last year.

In Singapore, the growth of the sport is aided by companies such as Dartslive, whose network machines allow players to compete against anyone in the world.

The Dartslive Official League, which comprises several tournaments, is the biggest darts competition in Singapore. The Super League is the main one, with close to 2,000 darters from 252 teams competing in its 15th season last year. The inaugural season in 2011 had 300 players from 40 teams.

Harith, 48, said: "The electronic darts scene has taken off in the last few years with Dartslive machines' popularity and interactive game-play. This has definitely helped to raise the interest levels and base of players in the region."

Thus, he felt the mix of sports and entertainment is necessary to continue growing the sport.

Former world youth champion Harith said: "The fans buy tickets to be entertained. If there is no crowd, there will be no sponsors, which means no prize money, and there

will be nobody playing for a living."

"From 2003 to 2011, I did not play steel-tip darts because the sport had gone stale and there was not much interest. Now, there is excitement and something to look forward to, as it is no more boring and most of us enjoy the atmosphere."

However, he acknowledged that the boisterous atmosphere can have an impact on the action, saying: "The noise can be daunting for a first-timer and those who adapt fastest have an edge."

But the duo said that they draw the line at darters going over the top to gain a perceived advantage.

In London last month, James Wade was accused of thuggish behaviour when he shouted at Seigo Asada during his second-round win. He later apologised.

Paul said: "If you are expressive towards yourself or the crowd, it is okay, but aggression towards opponents is uncalled for."

Harith added: "I have met some who deliberately delay their shots, or cut across my path just to try to put me off."

"If it is nothing personal, it is okay. After all, you do need some bad boys in sports. But if it goes over the top, the organising body will have to issue warnings."

PHOTOS: ST FILE, DARTSLIVE

GETTING USED TO IT

There is no right or wrong, only personal preference. I remember how the hall was silent when players were at the oche in the early days. But now, fans are allowed to drink and they want to have fun.

PAUL LIM, 64, on how darts has evolved and the need to adapt to changing times.



JAZZ IT UP

Now, there is excitement and something to look forward to, as it is no more boring and most of us enjoy the atmosphere.

HARITH LIM, 48, on the need for a mix of sports and entertainment to grow darts.



From dingy British pubs to TV spectacle across Europe

LONDON • By conventional measures, darts players are not telegenic. They mutter to themselves onstage. They wear flamboyant polyester polos. They cradle their handful of tiny spears and stare a lot at a fibrous board 2.36m away.

But professional darts has catapulted itself from musty British pubs onto millions of television sets across Europe, an insurgency by a working-class sport that has turned the best of its mostly middle-age players into stars.

Its premier event, William Hill World Championship, has grown into a three-week affair with a £2.5 million (\$4.3 million) purse, replete with cheerleaders and thunderous walk-on music, and the sport's promoters work tirelessly to ratchet up the show.

One area of emphasis in recent years has been to encourage the players to show some emotion for the TV cameras, celebrate some after a big turn or win.

Though mild by the standards of other professional sports, the yelps and fist pumps and prancing are setting up a clash with some tradition-

als. The dispute is all part of a makeover of darts engineered by Barry Hearn, the silver-tongued chairman of the Professional Darts Corp, or PDC, and the mastermind behind the sport's growth on TV.

"I talk to players: 'Do not be boring, remember the customer,'" he said.

"The guy that's watching on TV wants to know, are you happy when you walk on stage? If you look bored I've got no time for you."

"It's not WWE, because it's a real sport without any rehearsal."

For years, professional darts associations have tried to shed the game's links to the smoky pubs where it blossomed nearly a century ago. Beer has been banished from the stage. So have cigarettes.

Players walk to their places through cheering throngs of fans as a hand-picked song booms over the loudspeakers and the auditorium becomes bathed in cool, blue light.

At the recent World Championship at the Alexandra Palace in north London, it was as if a 3,000-member fraternity party was taking place in the same hall as

a complicated tooth extraction. Some players wear earplugs now to block out the pandemonium; even a moment of mugging for the crowd can throw an opponent off.

Take, for example, a first-round match played before fans dressed in all manner of full-body costumes: a Christmas tree, a giraffe, a duck and Woody from "Toy Story", not to mention a heavy-drinking bunch of priests and nuns.

Vincent van der Voort, a veteran Dutch player known for his quick-fire style, was up against Laurence Ilagan, a wiry Filipino with a relatively thin resume in major events.

The duo took turns throwing from behind a line known as the oche, with each successful shot pulling them closer to the goal of dropping from 501 points to zero.

Van der Voort was nonchalant, though his face grew redder and sweatier. Ilagan, on the other hand, strode around the stage, pumping his fist and once pausing, theatrically, to make a mean face, point a forefinger in the air and then jab it towards the ground.

Van der Voort eventually pre-

pared to his opponent's showmanship proved a challenge.

"Once I was in a rhythm, I thought, I'm going to smash you, really, I'm going to smash you all over," he said after the match. "Then he starts walking around and I couldn't get my rhythm going."

In any event, the PDC, which operates the biggest tournaments, has begun reviewing whether it needs more referees and a system for docking points during a match.

The only problem is no one seems to know what qualifies as excessive celebration. Several ex-players said, confusingly, that what mat-

tered was not the manner so much as whether a player had earned one.

Hearn agreed. "If you've done something that's worth celebrating, that's not a problem," he said. "If you hit 26 with three darts and celebrate, you'll be in front of the disciplinary panel."

Over-celebrating, though, is hardly the only offence to have rocked the sport lately. Gary Anderson, a two-time world champion, was accused last month of passing gas so pungent it threw his opponent off. He even turned the blame on his opponent, leaning on the "he who smelt it dealt it" dictum.

Above: Fans reacting during the PDC World Championship final between Briton Michael Smith and Dutchman Michael van Gerwen at the Alexandra Palace in north London, on Tuesday.

Left: Van Gerwen celebrating as pyrotechnics ignite after he beat Smith 7-3. PHOTOS: EPA-EFE



The popularity of darts, like professional golf with Tiger Woods, has tended to rise and fall with the calibre and charisma of the top player.

The 1980s, another golden age for the sport, were dominated by Eric Bristow. Back then, almost all of the fans in attendance were amateur players themselves, said Keith Deller, a former world champion.

Currently, the darts world is dominated by Dutchman Michael van Gerwen, who many consider the best player ever, and who is known to play to the crowd.

But even the traditionalists give Hearn credit as well.

"Barry Hearn is the man," said van der Voort, "and if he likes it that's everybody's over-celebrating or whatever they do, then everybody's going to do it." NYTIMES

Fitness



Personal trainers and exercise experts stress that well-rounded fitness not only helps people stay injury-free but also keeps workouts varied.
PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

HotBods

Text and pictures by Chong Jun Liang



Douglas Soh, 26
Civil servant

Height: 1.70m Weight: 70kg

Exercise regimen: My exercise routine is to do strength training at the gym thrice a week. In between those days, I do some light cardiorespiratory exercises that help me to recover from the gym sessions. I also play canoe polo during the weekends.

Diet: I adhere to a nutritious diet. I ensure that I get adequate protein intake but I am not too averse to carbohydrates or food that contain some fat. Proper hydration is also important in aiding training performance and it also prevents me from overeating.



Quah Sze Tin, 25
Business analyst

Height: 1.60m Weight: 50kg

Exercise regimen: I do cardiorespiratory exercises such as swimming, Zumba and running two or three times a week. I have started regular gym sessions and focus on light strength training.

Diet: I eat home-cooked meals whenever possible and try to eat more vegetables. My mum is also a positive influence in my eating habits and ensures that I get enough nutrition for my daily activities.

SCAN AND WATCH
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EXERCISE SAFELY AND PROGRESS GRADUALLY

Take small steps at start of year, listen to your body and mix it up, trainers advise

It is January, which means gyms and sports clubs are full of new participants using the beginning of the year as a reason to jump-start their fitness goals, and old clients returning from lazy weeks of vacation.

The one aspect they should all be paying attention to: principles of progression.

Although that might sound like something pertaining to guitar chords or education, it is fitness terminology for how to safely and yet effectively increase your exercise load to see gains in strength and endurance. Hint: You cannot and should not try to go from visiting the gym once a month to bench-pressing your weight, or from being couch potato to running a six-minute mile overnight.

But how do we know where to start and when to progress?

GETTING STARTED

If you are a neophyte or have been out of your routine for six months or longer, small and frequent doses of exercise are the way to go.

Washington personal trainer Elizabeth Brooks suggests starting with light cardio for 20 minutes three times a week, weight-bearing exercise for 20 minutes twice a week, as well as 10 minutes of daily stretching. That is a combined 150 minutes of exercise weekly – similar to government guidelines.

“But that’s just a base. You still need to think about how you can keep moving throughout the day, every day,” she says.

For those who have been semi-active or just away for a short while, her recommendations are different.

“If you’ve been away for a few weeks, you might start back with the same activities you were doing before your break, just decrease the intensity,” she says.

Instead of doing a regular pull-up, you might do a modified one (the feet rest on the floor, the bar is only a few feet off the ground and your body is at an incline).

This also means that Brooks’ clients will “get back to basics”. First they will do body-weight (no dumb-bells or machines) exercises – to make sure their bodies are moving soundly and safely on their own. “Once your body-weight squat looks good, we can consider adding weights,” Brooks says.

PROGRESSING

Max Prokopy is an exercise physiologist at the Speed Clinic at the University of Virginia School of Medicine (the acronym stands for strength, power, endurance, education and development).

He offers these guidelines for increasing intensity:

Easy to moderate running: No more than a 10 per cent increase in distance or duration per week, so a 20-minute run becomes 22 minutes, or a 2km run becomes 2.2km.

For weights, the timing and level of progression are more difficult to gauge.

Adding 10 per cent a week for bench press would mean you could become a bodybuilder in no time. Or, more likely, get hurt.

“Basically, the greater the intensity of the exercise, the more gradual the increase,” Prokopy says. He and the other experts suggest using form, ease and level of soreness as indications that it is time to increase – slightly – the amount of weight.

In fact, form, ease and soreness can be important indicators of when to raise the level of any fitness routine, and might serve athletes better than automatic increases in distance, duration or weight.

“Listen to the body,” Brooks says.

Can you use and maintain good form throughout a particular movement or duration?

Has your routine stopped posing a challenge? Are you no longer sore after your workouts?

Then it could be time to increase intensity.

MAINTAINING PROGRESSION

“I always tell my clients that when it comes to fitness, we want to focus on being well-rounded and not to get too focused on numbers,” says Mike Tanoory, a personal trainer in Washington.

By numbers, he is referring to those on your weighing scale, your Garmin watch or your dumb-bells. So rather than, for example, getting caught up in running at a certain clip, mix it up and hit several facets of fitness, such as range of motion, coordination, balance and strength, as well as cardio.

Being well-rounded is not just a great way to stay injury-free, Tanoory says, but also to keep workouts interesting so that hopefully we continue to do them every day for the rest of our lives.

“This never ends. There is no age it stops. Finding a way to incorporate these good habits in your daily life is key,” he says. Note that he said “daily”.

Being sedentary during the week and then working out like a college athlete during the weekend is a sure route to injury.

Finally, remember that your fitness is your fitness, experts say. In other words, listen to your body and do not worry about what another runner or gym-goer is doing.

Progress – whatever that means to you (getting stronger, faster, gaining endurance, losing weight) – happens when you work out consistently and progress gradually.

“Take your cues from how you feel,” Brooks says. “Not from the latest fitness trend, other people in the gym or a TV programme.”

WASHINGTON POST

Pesilat negara berkalung emas di Kejohanan Dunia



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A League	Brisbane Roar	Perth Glory	4.00pm	LW
Asian Cup	Australia	Jordan	7.00pm	LW
Spanish League	Eibar	Villarreal	7.00pm	LW
Asian Cup	Thailand	India	9.30pm	LW
English Cup	Manchester City	Rotherham	10.00pm	LW
English Cup	Fulham	Oldham	10.00pm	LW

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The Sunday Times says

A rich history dating back 700 years

Marking the start of a commemoration with a disappearing act may sound like an oxymoron. But that is what the Singapore Bicentennial Office has done. To kick off a year of remembering Singapore's bicentennial, the office made the statue of Sir Stamford Raffles at Boat Quay "disappear". Artist Teng Kai Wei covered the polymarble statue with acrylic paint that made Raffles, when viewed from a certain angle, blend almost seamlessly into the OCBC building across the river.

A Bicentennial Office spokesman explained that the artwork was "an opportunity to engage Singaporeans in an open dialogue about the many other men and women who also arrived on our shores and made significant contributions". With bicentennial events kicking off from Jan 28, the hope is Singaporeans remember that the island's history "is a longer, 700-year story that dates back to 1299". Certainly the juxtaposition of the statue against OCBC, the longest-established bank here,

is a reminder of the role Chinese immigrants, for instance, played in building modern Singapore. Raffles may have plucked Singapore into the then global colonial system, but he was not the first to recognise the island's strategic importance. Professor John Miksic's book, *Singapore And The Silk Road Of The Sea 1300-1800*, documents Singapore's stature as a prosperous port through most of the 14th century, and a city that was fought over by South-east Asian empires.

There is archaeological proof that Singapore imported goods from China and India, and was home to South-east Asian peoples as well as early Chinese immigrants. This Little Red Dot's multicultural roots run deep, and this year's commemoration is a good opportunity to reiterate these deep historical and social ties. Colonialism was but a mere intermission in this island's epic narrative, and the Bicentennial Office has done well to remind Singaporeans of this fact.

ThinkingAloud

Seat-belt warning as storm clouds loom in 2019

A new great-power rivalry, tired old squabbles with Malaysia, and unfolding events point to some turbulence ahead



Warren Fernandez

Editor-in-Chief

You have been here before. As you settle into your comfortable seat for the long flight ahead, a voice crackles from the cockpit.

"Our flying time today will be 12 hours, 40 minutes, and we expect a smooth journey ahead, but there looks to be some pockets of turbulence along the way," your captain says, sounding vaguely assuring. "We suggest you keep your seat belt on."

So was said on my recent Singapore Airlines flight home from holidaying abroad. It prompted several hours of meandering musings from 30,000 feet in the air about what lies ahead in the new year. Some of the storm clouds that appear to loom on the political horizon include:

1. US-China: Rivalries among frenemies

Three recent developments sum up the precarious state of relations between the world's two main powers, now on a tentative 90-day hiatus while officials struggle to dial down simmering trade tensions.

First, Apple's profits warning – its first since 2002 – sent global markets into a tailspin when they reopened for trading at the start of the year, on concerns about the slowing demand in China and widening impact of the ongoing Sino-US trade spat. Jittery investors regained their composure somewhat on Friday, while some continued to fret about the less than ominous beginnings.

On Thursday, China's dramatic landing of a lunar probe on the far side of the moon signalled the country's growing technological and economic prowess. Inevitably, this forced the world's scientists, policymakers and commentators to shake off any holiday-induced stupor they might have been languishing under.

Such concerns about China were reflected starkly in the remarks by the new Acting US Defence Secretary Patrick Shanahan, who stepped up to replace his predecessor James Mattis, who resigned over policy differences with President Donald Trump.

In one of his first statements since taking on the job, he told civilian leaders of the US military that, for all the other strategic challenges around the world, their top priority was to focus on "China, China, China".

This made plain that the shift to a mode of "strategic competition" with China, first mentioned in a US defence position paper last January, is very much part of a nascent Washington consensus.

The latest issue of *Foreign Affairs* reflects this, with its cover story



ST ILLUSTRATION: CEL GULAPA

headlined, "Who will run the world?" In the lead essay, the US-based publication's editor Gideon Rose laments how much the Trump administration's view of the world is at odds with the liberal global order that American leaders have sought to foster for decades.

"Trumpism is about winning, which is something you do to others. The (liberal world) order requires leading, which is something you do with others," he notes.

In any case, those who dismiss the sunny internationalist outlook as a "fairy tale", believe "its day is done", he adds, noting that these sceptics say: "Americans don't want it. The world does not want it. US power is declining; China's is rising. A return to great-power conflict is inevitable; the only question is how far things will go."

Just how far things go in the months to come matters greatly to many countries, not least Singapore, which have thrived on the open, rules-based international trading order, and are loath to see the rise of a new great-power rivalry that will force an awkward "with-me-or-

against-me" taking of sides.

Some are now saying that a new Cold War, between the US and China, is likely if not inevitable. Yet, most commentators agree that this is a blind alley no one wants to go down, so the question that arises is whether leaders – and their people – will have the wisdom to avoid doing so.

Perhaps the wise words of US President Franklin Roosevelt, who helped shape the post-World War II global order, as quoted by Mr Rose in his essay, might help focus minds.

"We have learnt that we cannot live alone, at peace; that our own well-being is dependent on the well-being of other nations far away. We have learnt that we must live as men, not ostriches, nor as dogs in a manger. We have learnt to be citizens of the world, members of the world community. We have learnt the simple truth, as Emerson said, that 'the only way to a friend is to be one'."

2. Malaysia-Singapore: Have we not learnt?

Those words ring true on matters closer to home, where several bilateral issues flared up from out of

the blue in the dying days of last year.

Disputes over airspace and maritime boundaries, food supplies and water prices, and talk of crooked bridges, have a *deja vu*, "oh-so-yesterday" ring about them. Sadly, they smack of zero-sum thinking, and of a desire to be "winning, rather than leading" the way forward to better lives for the peoples of both countries.

3. 4G leaders: The end of the beginning

Significantly, these bilateral transitions come at a time of political transition on both sides of the Causeway.

Inevitably, Malaysia's new-old Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad will have to make way for a successor at some point, although to whom, or how this might unfold, remains a little hazy.

The new leader will need to establish himself, domestically and internationally, hopefully without being saddled with bitter disputes that belong in the past.

In Singapore, while the speculation that raged for most of

last year – on the likely successor to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong – has finally ended, the handover process remains a work in progress, with the critical endorsement of the electorate having to be sought, quite likely later this year.

PM Lee spelt out the challenge for all concerned in plain terms in his New Year's message: "Our model of governance is quite exceptional, and has served us well. It has enabled Singapore to make the most of what we have and stand out in a highly competitive world.

"Singapore politics cannot afford to be riven and destabilised by the rivalries, contestations and factions so often seen elsewhere. Instead, Singaporeans must stay united, and work together resolutely, to strengthen and renew our social compact."

4. Brexit: Flattering allusions or delusions?

Even as the clock ticks down to March 29, when the United Kingdom is due to leave the European Union, its Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt – touted as a man who might replace Prime Minister Theresa May – was in Singapore, drawing parallels with how Britain might "plug into the international economic grid", just as Singapore had done and thrived, contrary to what many predicted in the 1960s.

While the remarks might be flattering, few Singaporeans would crave them, given that the economic implications of Britain crashing out of the EU without a deal on how best to do so are grave. That would leave the UK adrift, and at odds with itself, at a time when the world could do with some phlegmatic British sense and sensibility.

5. Elections and events: Expect the unexpected

All of the above will play out against the backdrop of major elections around the world, from Indonesia to India, Australia to Argentina. These, and other events, will throw up their share of surprises. Politicians focused on the short-term need to secure their own futures will be less inclined to take the long-term measures needed to grapple with the technological disruptions shaking industries and societies everywhere.

So, fasten your seat belts, everyone, as the turbulence ahead looks likely to make for a bit of a bumpy ride.

At tricky and testing times such as these, my mind drifts inexorably to words consigned to heart a long time ago, for solace and sustenance. So, along with my best wishes for the New Year, I offer you these lines from British poet Alfred Tennyson's *Ulysses*:

*Come, my friends,
Tis not too late to seek a newer
world.
Push off, and sitting well in order
smite
The sounding furrows; for my
purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the
baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulf will wash us
down:
It may be that we shall touch the
Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we
knew.
Though much is taken, much abides;
and though
We are not now that strength which
in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which
we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but
strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to
yield.*

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Mr Lee Tzu Yang became chairman of the Public Service Commission in August last year. To better gauge what scholarship applicants are like, the PSC will be introducing game-based assessments which will help uncover qualities like risk tolerance, the ability to adapt and perseverance. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

LunchWithSumiko

You can't be effective if you go against your instincts

When it comes to leadership, you have to be yourself, says Public Service Commission chairman Lee Tzu Yang



Sumiko Tan

Executive Editor

Lee Tzu Yang is pleasant, polite and answers every question I put to him as best as he can.

But he gets visibly uncomfortable when the conversation veers too much into personal territory.

The retired chairman of Shell companies in Singapore wears many hats, including chairman of the Public Service Commission (PSC).

In August last year, he took over that role from former senior civil servant Eddie Teo.

The PSC oversees the appointment and promotion of senior public servants, and also decides who gets government scholarships. I'm here to find out his plans for it.

Lunch is at the members' lounge on the commission's premises on the eighth floor of the National Library Building in Victoria Street.

At 64, Mr Lee looks fit and, at certain angles, you can still see the football and rugby player he was in school.

We have met once before, at a dinner when he was at Shell. He had struck me then as unassuming and quiet, someone who would rather listen than speak.

He leads me to a table where our plates have been filled with nasi briyani from Makanan Bollywood, a restaurant at the basement of

Peninsula Shopping Centre. The rice is fragrant and the chicken tender.

I ask if he's a foodie. He says he likes food but is not knowledgeable about it the way some of his friends are. "I'm just a consumer. Don't come to me for recommendations," he laughs.

We're meeting in December and so chit-chat about holidays.

I ask if he has been to anywhere interesting and he says he had attended his elder daughter's wedding. Where was it held?

He lets on that it was in the United States.

"It's quite a trip. Long trip. Absolutely jet-lagged," he adds.

HE RETIRED from Shell in 2014 after 35 years at the oil-gas giant, of them as chairman of the Singapore unit.

He had a reputation for being well respected and well liked. A former colleague says he was always on top of the many things on his plate, not one to lose his cool and was courteous to colleagues.

"Most people who work with him do so out of respect for him, not fear or dread of him," says the former colleague.

A friend of his describes him as a person who is quietly confident without being pushy, and with an interesting, multi-layered mind because of his wide interests.

Even while busy at Shell, Mr Lee was in many public service roles involving the economy, education and the arts.

He was, among other positions, founder chairman of the School of the Arts and chairman of the Casino Regulatory Authority.

Besides the PSC role, he is currently a member of the Council of Presidential Advisers and the Legal Service Commission.

He chairs the board of The Esplanade Company, as well as the Singapore University of Technology and Design.

He is also chairman of the Founders' Memorial Committee, which is conceptualising how the values of Singapore's founding generation of leaders can be remembered.

His first few months at PSC have

been very interesting, he says as we tuck into the briyani.

"I've always been interested in people issues. PSC is nothing if not to do with people."

I ask how he came to the PSC role. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had approached him, he replies.

"I was intrigued. When I retired from Shell, the things that I knew I was going to miss was not so much the strategic brainstorming and thinking about big concepts, but more the dealing with people issues," he says.

"I've always considered myself kind of a meddler in people's issues," he adds self-deprecatingly.

Even as Shell chairman, he was involved in recruitment and made it a point to meet new staff at all levels. He also did a lot of coaching and leadership development work.

"That's always been my hobby." I tell him I've heard he was a very good boss.

"I don't know what 'good' means but I was certainly very interested in people," is his reply.

He believes that managers should take a role in leadership development activities for their staff.

"Partly because it lets them know their staff better in a holistic sense as opposed to just the task that they can achieve, but also because they learn their own weaknesses and strengths," he says.

"Usually when you see somebody else, you say there but for the grace of God I would do the same thing, but now that I look at it from a distance, I can see that I could do it better or I could do it worse."

I ask him to describe his leadership style. He demurs and goes on to point out there are many different styles and "I won't want to say that one style or another style is going to win out over another".

What he does advise is this: "You have to be yourself. People have to believe you. If you're not yourself and you think that in order to be effective, you have to do something which is against your own instincts, you probably won't do it very well."

There will be people who are more task-oriented and those who are more people-oriented.

"They both can be effective. It depends on how balanced they are and how well understood they are by the team and how well they communicate with the team.

"Because in the end, it's not just about the leaders. It's about how the whole team appreciates and

works with the leader. So if you change every day, of course then your team gets very confused."

I try again and ask what it means for him when he says "be yourself".

It's better for others to say, he replies.

What have you heard then?

He laughs: "What have I heard? I've heard that I'm patient probably to a fault. I should stop listening to some people perhaps earlier than I should, than I have."

GIVEN his private sector background, I'm interested to know if he has been struck by or shocked by anything about the way the civil service is run.

"I'm actually somebody who's quite difficult to shock," he says.

The differences between the private and public sectors are "less real than we imagine".

Like the public sector, private sector companies, especially those that want to be around for a long time, must worry about issues like sustainability, talent and renewal, as well as their place in the community.

"You have to be accepted and you have to be valued for, in many ways, more than just what the services or the goods are that you sell to the community."

And like the private sector, there are parts of the public sector that must care about the books and at least break even, if not make a profit.

The difference between both worlds might be that the level of accountability increasingly being demanded of the public sector is probably of a higher magnitude than the private sector. Then again, companies like Facebook now face accountability demands too.

Still, he says, "the public sector has never been able to dodge the bullet" on accountability.

This is why the PSC is looking for people "who are minded to do things that are in the greater good for the community, but who are not just bleeding hearts".

"They must also be concerned about cost and efficiency and so on. But their hearts must be in the right place for the public sector."

"I think that's a very, very important part of it."

What he hopes to bring is his experience in evaluating and developing people.

On the scholarship aspect of PSC's role, he has been quite impressed by the applicants he has



WHAT WE ATE

2 nasi briyani and 2 teh tarik from Makanan Bollywood, #B1-06, Peninsula Shopping Centre, 3 Coleman Street

interviewed, describing them as "much more composed, confident, I'd say aggressive" than generations past.

These young Singaporeans are "not only talented but they are very practised and they are very well prepared for interviews".

Part of the challenge for the PSC is to look beyond the facade and identify the real person and his interests.

Currently, applicants go through a process that includes tests, questionnaires and exhaustive interviews.

The PSC will be introducing new technology in the selection process. One is game-based assessments, which are not widely used yet. These are basically online assessments where people perform a series of digital tasks.

How they react is correlated to the psychology of why they act in that way. "Very often there are no right or wrong answers. It just gives you a better profile than maybe an interview and so on."

These tests can be done many times involving different tasks and the results reveal qualities like a person's risk tolerance, the ability to learn as the game changes and perseverance.

These new tools allow for more cross-referencing. Cost per head, they are also cheaper than hours of laborious interviews, the businessman in him says.

They will also allow the PSC to deal with a greater cohort of applicants and look at a wider range of skills and qualifications.

He is aware of the usual

Singaporean instinct will be to now think of ways to "win" in the new selection system.

"That really is not what I'm trying to do," he says. "I'm not trying to get people better at gaming the system. I just want people to be themselves, but to understand a bit more about what we're looking for when we ask the questions."

The PSC's emphasis in recent years of getting scholarship holders from more diverse backgrounds will continue, and it is also looking more broadly at polytechnics.

He adds that while co-curricular activities are important, the commission is very interested in students who are involved in activities outside school.

"What motivates them? What have they learnt from these activities and what keeps them going at these activities, because that's authentic. That's not programmed and that in a way indicates their ability to deal with the world as it changes."

Beyond scholarships, he is looking at issues like the criteria considered in the appointment and promotion of senior public servants, and ensuring a talent pipeline.

WHILE he has never been a civil servant, it wasn't an unfamiliar world to him.

His late father, Tan Sri Lee Siow Mong, was a senior civil servant from the late 1930s to 1980 and among the earliest recruited into the Straits Settlements Civil Service, eventually serving both in Singapore and Malaysia.

Among other positions, the elder Mr Lee was permanent secretary for education (Singapore), general manager of the Public Utilities Board (Singapore) and general manager of the Employees Provident Fund in Malaysia.

He was also a long-time president of the China Society in Singapore, which promotes appreciation of Chinese culture.

Mr Lee's late mother was a housewife, and he was the youngest in a family of three boys and two sisters. One of his sisters is the poet Lee Tzu Pheng.

The family grew up in Bukit Timah and he studied at Anglo-Chinese School.

As the youngest, he was doted on and benefited from having older siblings. He had access to books beyond his age, for example. "I had a reasonably happy and advantaged childhood."

He did well in his studies, was a school debater and played football and rugby.

You must have been head prefect too, I joke.

Yah, he says, laughing. He was in fact head prefect.

He went to the London School of Economics and Political Science, the first of the siblings to study abroad. He wasn't a scholarship holder. "In fact, at the time, LSE was not a favoured government destination for scholars."

The 1970s were a politically active period in Britain and LSE was active in both left- and right-wing causes.

Which camp was he more aligned to? "I was probably more on the left," he says, but he wasn't active. "I just made myself useful in the halls of residence so I was able to ensure myself a place there."

He returned with a degree in economics, did his national service and got a job in Shell in 1979. "I was looking for a job, I just wrote to a whole bunch of companies and I accepted the first one that looked good and decent, which was Shell."

This became an HR lesson he learnt. "It's not enough just to have a good brand and all that. You must also be efficient in getting back and being first back to the person who applies."

For a time, he even read the news part-time over radio and TV.

He and his wife Veronica, a housewife, have two married daughters - a lawyer and a dancer - and an architect son, none of whom was a government scholarship holder. They also have a six-month-old granddaughter.

He considers himself semi-retired but feels "it's only a term - I do work almost every day". He doesn't golf as it's too demanding of time.

Lunch over, he poses gamely for the photos before we say goodbye.

I follow up with an e-mail clarifying some facts and also asking if he could share some personal tidbits like a favourite author or whether he plays a musical instrument, which I had not thought to ask at lunch.

Not surprisingly, I get a polite reply that he will pass on this.

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SCAN TO WATCH
Lee Tzu Yang on the scholarship holders' selection process
<http://str.sg/tzuyang>



Anti-smoking measures

Snuffing out an unhealthy habit in Singapore

Orchard Road is a no-smoking zone, as part of the Government's crackdown on the unhealthy habit. **Insight** looks at the measures so far and what lies ahead.



Benson Ang
Lifestyle Correspondent

It is a typical scene at coffee shops across the island. At the TG339 Eating House at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1, there are four tables in a smoking corner, each occupied by a customer.

In this space, smokers, including hawker Liu Siong Lin, 30, indulge in their afternoon puff, the smoke from their cigarettes rising, curling, then dissipating into the surrounding air.

Such spaces at coffee shops are getting fewer. One day, they might disappear altogether.

Since June 2017, the National Environment Agency (NEA) has stopped accepting applications for new smoking corners in food retail establishments islandwide.

Mr Liu tells **The Sunday Times** in Mandarin: "Finding a smoking area is becoming more and more inconvenient, as smoking areas, if I can find an area, I can't find an area. I don't smoke."

The issue of smoking in public was in the spotlight last week in connection with Singapore's most famous shopping stretch. On the first day of the new year, a smoking ban in the Orchard Road precinct kicked in, prohibiting smokers from lighting up in public spaces except within designated smoking areas.

That same day, the minimum legal age for smoking also went up from 18 to 19. This means smokers now have to be at least 19 years old before they can buy, use and possess tobacco products legally.

The age will be raised progressively every January until 2021, when smokers will have to be at least 21.

There are some recent moves by the authorities to protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of second-hand tobacco smoke, and discourage people from smoking, with all the associated health issues that can result from it.

Insight takes stock of Singapore's crackdown on smoking over the years as the country enters what appears to be the last gasp of the light-up era.

STAMPING OUT THE HABIT

More than 2,000 people in Singapore are said to die prematurely from smoking-related diseases every year.

Smoking, also, conservatively, costs the country \$600 million a year in direct healthcare costs and lost productivity.

Even second-hand smoke can be harmful. Experts say it contains thousands of toxic chemicals, some of which are carcinogenic, and exposure can exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, as well as lead to an increased incidence of coronary heart and vascular diseases.

So it is no wonder that there are concerted official efforts to stamp out the habit.

Smoking prohibition was first introduced in Singapore in 1970.

Under the Smoking (Prohibition in Certain Places) Act, smoking is defined as inhaling and expelling the smoke of tobacco or any other

The family must play its part in

substance, as well as the holding of any cigar, cigarette, pipe or any other form of tobacco product that is lit or emitting smoke.

The Government aims to prohibit smoking in all public areas, except at designated smoking areas.

To do so, the NEA is progressively extending smoking regulations to more public places, including areas in buildings, food retail establishments, transport nodes, public service vehicles, and sports and recreational facilities.

Under the law, operators and managers of premises are required to stop patrons, visitors and staff from smoking in such prohibited areas, or request that they leave the premises.

According to the NEA website, smokers are also reminded to be socially responsible and considerate when smoking in public places, and to smoke only in areas where smoking is not prohibited.

Over the years, the authorities have also been trying to reduce the number of smokers through measures such as banning tobacco advertisements and point-of-sale displays, as well as increasing tobacco taxes.

The result? A general fall in the number of smokers, from 23 per cent of the population in the 1970s, to around 12 to 14 per cent since 2012.

Is this enough? Not quite.

Professor Teo Yik Ying, dean of the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, says although Singapore has done well so far in driving the campaign against tobacco use, it can definitely do more.

He says: "The present situation is enviable by many governments worldwide, but we should aim to systematically reduce this further and, as a country, have the eventual vision of a tobacco-free Singapore."

—

PROFESSOR TEO YIK YING, dean of the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

DON'T EVEN START

Given that most smokers pick up the habit in their early teens, due to experimentation and peer pressure, I have focused on educating these teens about smoking prevention in a positive way. Using this approach, I want to get them to not even start smoking, so as to create a generation of non-smokers.

—

DR KOONG HENG NUNG, founder of non-profit organisation Tobacco Free Generation International.



The lowdown on lighting up



Lower Seletar Reservoir Park, one of many parks islandwide where smoking is prohibited. The ban also covers places like playgrounds and exercise areas, including adjacent amenities for users. ST FILE PHOTO



A beach in East Coast. Smoking is allowed at beaches, open spaces in residential estates and town centres, and approved smoking corners at food retail establishments, among other places. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

WHERE SMOKING IS PROHIBITED:

Smoking is largely not permitted if you are within a public service vehicle, such as a taxi or bus, or in a building, except at indoor smoking rooms and uncovered areas on the rooftops of multi-storey carparks.

If you are outside a building or public service vehicle, smoking is prohibited in the following places:

- Everywhere around hospital compounds
- Educational institutions and their compounds, including any area within 5m of a school

SOCIAL TRIGGERS

For Dr Paulin Straughan, 55, professor of sociology (practice) and dean of students at Singapore Management University's School of Social Sciences, Singapore will have to invoke the power of informal social support to see further reduction in the number of smokers.

The family must play its part in

WHERE SMOKING IS ALLOWED:

Approved smoking corners at food retail establishments, Smoking rooms at office premises, Changi Airport and public entertainment outlets, Designated smoking areas within university compounds, parks under the purview of JTC Corporation, Playgrounds and exercise areas, including adjacent amenities for users, Reservoirs, Swimming pools, including changing and shower rooms, or areas frequented by any pool user

- Pavilions within any residential premises or building meant to hold functions
- Pedestrian overhead bridges, covered or underground walkways
- Washrooms, including mobile toilets
- Any area within 5m of ventilation intakes, external windows, openings, entrances and exits to buildings where smoking is prohibited
- Some parks, gardens and nature reserves managed by the National Parks Board

long as no second-hand tobacco smoke is expelled. In other words, the windows are fully wound up

- Open spaces in residential estates and town centres
- Open public spaces, surface carparks, uncovered areas on the top deck of multi-storey carpark buildings, uncovered walkways and vacant land, except those in the Orchard Road no-smoking zone
- Beaches
- Residential homes
- Private vehicles, such as cars, as

rary exceptions where smoking is prohibited, such as in covered drop-off and pick-up points – whether permanent or temporary – as well as in queues, where two or more people are in the queue. Specific areas, facilities or buildings in the above will still be smoking-prohibited areas.

Aside from the national smoking prohibition laws, the public should be mindful of any additional house rules or by-laws put in place by owners or managers of properties against smoking on their premises.

SOURCE: NEA WEBSITE

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Where there's smoke, there's ire



Rohit Brijnath

My friend is visiting and she is a lovely, wise, uncomplicated guest who has no demands except sufficient cold Carlsbergs and a decaf shirley. The first request is fine, the second has me in a panic. My curtains will shrink and my couch will require Febreeze but maybe it's too late for my lungs. They greedily sucked in smoke for over 30 years.

My friend has spent a career reporting on thugs and terrorists and is not easily intimidated by threats. I wouldn't ban her anyway but have nevertheless herded her gently to a window where she puffs pensively. In my house, where no helper lives, no child and no dog, it's my rules. People can smoke there, but in Orchard Road and in public, well, that's another matter.

Fundamentalists may want smoking banned in homes but I'd resist this invasion of my private space as fiercely as Horatius at the bridge. Next we'll be testing smoke from barbecues for particles, banning incense sticks and putting sound meters outside everyone's front door to measure the decibel level of music and arguments. It's plain silly. We want to live in a smoke-free society, not a smoke-filled one.

Of course I mention to my friend about her smoking and quote from various surgeons' general's reports about lung cancer because I am now that most painful and pious of species: the former smoker. The nicotine bully. The anti-cigarette clergy. Who often wants a drag but wears a halo for resisting it.

So I have to be careful now about ascending the high moral ground. After all the smokers we're herding like pariahs into virtual pens – designated smoking areas – in Orchard Road were once my clan.

These are people who recognise one another from the long walls they make together to the far corners of office buildings, who are locked in glass cages in airports like an unwanted breed, who know the frustration behind Mark Twain's humorous words: "Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I've done it thousands of times."

And yet – sorry, bows – I support the ban on smoking in Orchard Road and, for that matter, in other public spaces. My lungs are fine but the streets are everyone's and we are all entitled to an unpolluted environment (and a sidewalk unsullied by butts). Of course individual liberties matter till they start to impinge on everyone else's. Community outweighs the single character. Let's just call it the greater good.

When I was a young man, you could blow smoke rings at fellow plane passengers and hammer at your typewriter in a crowded newsroom with a dangling cigarette from which you inhaled inspiration.

Now we know better.

Now we know that some of the rugged cowboys in those famous, old cigarette ads reportedly died of lung disease. Now we know the smouldering cigarellos that Clint Eastwood clenched between his teeth as he spat out dialogue were just cinematic fiction because he was a non-smoker. Now I should apologise to my former colleagues who inadvertently sucked in my second-hand smoke.

Twenty-five years ago the US Environmental Protection Agency released a report that classified second-hand smoke as a Group 1 carcinogen, a designation that means that there is sufficient evidence that the substance causes cancer in humans. We didn't listen enough, or know enough, but now we do.

Messages in those years came to us sporadically and too late, but now educated governments push strongly. In some nations, tobacco products cannot be displayed in shops. In India, if an actor lights up in a film then a warning message about smoking is flashed on the screen.

In Singapore comes the Orchard Road prohibition and in Malaysia a ban in eateries, and really it's not aimed at us only but at young folk. Kids deserve the ugly truth of what we've done to the planet and the chance to take a cleaner breath.

The wider we spread information, the stricter we are, the harder we fight for cleaner skies, the more lives we save. Future generations deserve our thoughtful approach. My grandfather didn't smoke and I am thankful. After all, my grandfather smoked filtered cigarettes and died of lung cancer, my dad worked for a cigarette company and I took my first puff at 14 and was beautifully dizzy.

Only when a growth appeared in my sinus did I quit. Fear is the greatest deterrent because a tumour just can't be stubbed out. Like most former smokers, I suffer from regret and for all smoking's unexplainable pleasure – like one more addictive roll of a gambling dice – I wouldn't touch a cigarette in a life lived again. We know more and we know better.

My friend is in her late 50s and I wish she would stop smoking and start exercising but we can't live each other's lives. This is still a personal choice till it involves our roads, for then it must become cooperation. We share so much in a city but, most tellingly, also its air.

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Anti-smoking measures

Indonesia
Cash-rich tobacco lobby, cheap puffs fuel smoking habit

Nur Asyiqin Mohamad Salleh
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

A pack of 20 Marlboro Lights costs about 26,000 rupiah (\$2.50) at convenience stores. It can go up to 30,000 rupiah, depending on the store.

At two years old, chubby-cheeked Aldi Rizal became the face of Indonesia's smoking crisis in 2010 after a shocking video showing him twirling lit cigarettes in his fingers between long, hungry puffs was shared across the Internet, rocketing him to international fame.

More than eight years on, the boy from Sumatra, who used to light up 40 times a day, has kicked the habit. But his country continues fall behind in the fight against smoking.

As its South-east Asian neighbours forge ahead in recent years with stricter regulations, arming anti-smoking efforts with more teeth, in Indonesia, tax laws and enforcement, the low price of cigarettes, and the clout of the tobacco lobby, continue to fuel the habit.

Statistics of smokers are grim – and health experts and anti-smoking activists say they will remain so unless the government starts getting tough.

More than half of the 122 million adult smokers in Asian countries live in Indonesia, according to a 2016 study by the South-east Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (Seatac).

Also worrying is the prevalence of smoking among the young. About 20 per cent of those aged between 13 and 15 smoke. Each year, about 16.4 million Indonesians aged 10 to 19 years old experiment with smoking.

And 2010 figures from Indonesia's Health Ministry showed that 30 per cent of young people had their first puff even before they turned 10.

Anti-smoking groups have, for years, insisted cigarettes are too cheap and easy to come by. A 20-stick pack of Marlboro – one of the priciest brands – costs about 26,000 rupiah (\$2.50). Cigarettes can be bought by the stick too, for just a few cents, and while by law, the minimum age of purchase is 18, shops frequently sell cigarettes to children under 18 without a batman eyelid.

Indonesia has, in the past decade, taken steps to discourage smoking, but activists say regulations and enforcement have been half-hearted.

More needs to be done to help the country keep pace with growing anti-smoking efforts in the rest of the world.

As it is, tobacco companies – which are seeing slow growth in developed markets, and facing increasingly tough regulations around the world – have far freer rein in Indonesia. It is one of the few nations that is not party to the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which includes restrictions on sales to children and the extent to which tobacco companies can lobby the government.

"Indonesia is the most liberal country for the tobacco industry," said Dr Mohamad Subuh, the director-general of disease prevention and control at Indonesia's Health Ministry, which hopes to, among other things, provide greater support for smokers trying to quit it out, and increase awareness about tobacco's harm.

In 2014, it became compulsory for 40 per cent of a cigarette box to be covered with graphic pictorial health warnings.

The capital city of Jakarta took a seemingly big step in 2005, when it passed a law to ban smoking in public places. Schools, hospitals and public transportation were designated fully smoke-free zones. Other areas, like offices and restaurants, can have smoking areas. Under the law, offenders should face a six-month jail term or 50 million rupiah fine. But most see it as an empty threat: Violations are common as enforcement is lax.

The Jakarta Smoke Free Coalition, in a study conducted between 2014 and 2015, found that people still light up in 70 per cent of places – 1,085 out of 1,550 – where smoking is forbidden, including schools and healthcare centres.

Indonesia also has the weakest restrictions on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship in ASEAN, Seatac pointed out. It remains one of the few countries in the world to allow tobacco commercials to be broadcast on television – though, in 2012, these can be broadcast only from 9.30pm to 5am, a move aimed at limiting children's exposure to them.

A proposed ban on cigarette ads was scrapped by Indonesia's Parliament from the draft revision of the country's broadcasting law in October 2017.

Tobacco companies have denied targeting youth, but activists say they are still too close for comfort to this vulnerable group. Unlike in many other countries, tobacco companies are still allowed to sponsor events in Indonesia, from sporting tournaments to concerts.

Some provide scholarships. Djarum, an Indonesian giant that produces the popular "kretek" clove cigarettes, has training programmes for young athletes.

A Universitas Indonesia study found that 72 per cent of respondents over the age of 15 said they would quit smoking if the price of a pack of cigarettes rose to 50,000 rupiah. But a drastic hike is unlikely.

Some months back, the government announced it would not go ahead with plans to raise taxes on tobacco. The move, despite the lobby groups like the National Kretek Prevention Committee, which lamented that the industry had been under pressure because of tax hikes over the last few years.

The cash-rich tobacco lobby is likely to stand in the way of a concerted push to clamp down on smoking in Indonesia. Tobacco, after all, is central to the country's economy. Indonesia is the world's fifth-largest tobacco producer, with more than 300 cigarette manufacturers employing about six million people, and paying more than 140 trillion rupiah in taxes in 2017 – about 9 per cent of total tax revenues, a heftier slice than even the oil and gas sector.

Sampoerna – an Indonesian tobacco company more than 90 per cent owned by Philip Morris International, the titan behind the iconic Marlboro brand – was Indonesia's largest taxpayer in 2017.

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STUBBING OUT A GLOBAL MENACE

Across Asia, various governments have stepped in to curb smoking to manage the side effects of second-hand smoke, and in a bid to reduce the burden tobacco use has imposed on healthcare systems. Our correspondents look at what's been done – and how effective it has been – to get smokers to stop lighting up.

The smoke from traffic warden Wang Rui's cigarette wafts upwards, as the 30-year-old keeps a look out for drivers who park illegally on a sidewalk near his office in Beijing.

China/Hong Kong Laws in place, but more enforcement needed

Danson Cheong
China Correspondent
In Beijing

Claire Huang
Hong Kong Correspondent
In Hong Kong

A 20-stick pack of Marlboro Lights usually costs 22 yuan (\$3.45). A similar pack in Hong Kong costs HK\$59 (\$0.25).

Malaysia No more lighting up in eateries allowed

Trinna Leong
Malaysia Correspondent
In Kuala Lumpur

A pack of Marlboro Lights costs RM17.40 (\$5.70).

Malaysia is getting serious about curbing second-hand smoke.

The country kicked off the new year by implementing a nationwide ban on puffing in public spaces.

Granted, it is not an entirely new

Australia Plain packaging, bans, high prices pay off

Jonathan Pearlman
For The Sunday Times
In Sydney

A 20-cigarette packet of Marlboro Gold, or Lights, typically costs \$29.50.

Australia has adopted some of the world's toughest anti-smoking measures in recent years, including plain packaging laws and bans on smoking in public places, and these

appear to have paid off.

Smoking rates in Australia have fallen steadily for decades and are among the lowest in the developed world. About 13 per cent of Australian adults smoked daily in 2016, compared with 23 per cent in 2002.

The decline has been attributed to Australia's aggressive efforts to prevent smoking. These included the introduction from 2012 of the world's first plain packaging laws, which removed brand logos from cigarette packets and required

them to include graphic health warnings. All packets must use a plain font for the brand name.

The measures prompted a backlash from cigarette and tobacco firms, which feared the laws would spread to other countries, and launched legal action to try to block the reforms. The action did not prevent dozens of countries proposing or adopting similar measures, including Singapore, France, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Norway.

Last June, Australia won a landmark dispute in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which ruled that the measures were lawful.

Health Minister Dzulkefly Ahmad told reporters last week: "Some are concerned if this is just a half-hearted measure. But for us at the ministry, this is important."

Some eateries such as mamak (Indian Muslim) restaurants have abided by the rules, but found ways

to still cater to customers who wish to light up.

For example, smoking is not permitted within 3m of any permanent roof connected to a main building of an eatery. A visit by The Sunday Times to a mamak restaurant in the suburbs of Kuala Lumpur found patrons smoking, vaping and sharing a shisha while seated outdoors on the 3m beyond the stipulated distance.

Within the mamak restaurant, no-smoking signs were placed on every table and at the cashier.

But not everyone has been complying with the rule. In Selangor, a waiter at a mamak restaurant was scolded and slapped after asking a patron to stop smoking.

A group of smokers has filed a suit in court, challenging the ban, naming the Health Ministry as the respondent. In spite of this, the government is standing firm.

Experts say Australia's tough

one, I think it's okay," said Mr Wang, who has been smoking since he was 15.

He is one of the country's more than 300 million smokers – and in recent years, China has been trying to get them to butt out.

Under the central government's Healthy China 2030 plan released in 2016, the country intends to reduce the smoking rate among people 15 and older to 20 per cent, from 27 per cent in 2015.

China urgently needs a nationwide ban on smoking in public places, said the World Health Organisation's director of tobacco control in China, Dr Gauden Galea. Currently, some of the biggest cities – including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Hangzhou and Xi'an – have banned smoking in public places.

In many parts of China, cigarettes

also continue to be offered as a form of greeting.

Lighting up is banned in indoor public places, restaurants, offices and on public transport.

Businesses that fail to stop smoking on their premises can be fined up to 10,000 yuan (\$1,980), and have their licences revoked. Smokers can also be fined 200 yuan.

The ban has led to a dip in the number of smokers, according to a White Paper by the city government in 2017, but enforcement of the restrictions could be a lot stricter.

Even now, diners continue to light up in restaurants, and many smokers like Mr Wang still think it's okay to smoke in your own buildings.

And anti-smoking campaigners point out that government crackdowns on smoking face pushback from the tobacco industry.

In many parts of China, cigarettes



Some of the biggest cities in China – Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Hangzhou and Xi'an – have banned smoking in public places. ST PHOTO: DANSON CHEONG

BLANKET BAN BURGED
Dr Galea said raising cigarette prices through taxation will allow the government to maintain revenue from tobacco sales while reducing consumption, and putting in place a blanket ban would make laws easier to enforce than piece-meal legislation.

"Experience from Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Xi'an and now Hangzhou, which all have comprehensive bans in place with very good enforcement and public communication, shows that these laws can work and are working in China," he said.

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, the government there has banned smoking in indoor areas of restaurants, workplaces, public indoor areas and some public outdoor areas since 2007, but breaches are common and enforcement has been lax.

Last October, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said the government would ban electronic cigarettes and other new tobacco products, marking a U-turn from an earlier proposal in June to just regulate the sale and use of alternative smoking devices.

Firm details on the proposed ban will be available only after lawmakers approve it.

So far, a group of 24 organisations, including the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health, the medical profession, educators and youth groups, has welcomed Mrs Lam's proposal, although critics and tobacco companies say this deprives people of choice and goes against the ethos of a free market.

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"We'll see them in court. We'll fight the case and ensure a successful programme to safeguard air purity for Malaysians, especially young children and the elderly who can't defend themselves in public areas," says Datuk Seri Dzulkefly.

The government, meanwhile, has promised to come up with regulations designed to smoking zones, so smokers too have their space.

The only states yet to implement the ban are Sabah and Sarawak, which are putting it off until the state Cabinets make a decision.

Sabah is now moving to educate the public via loudspeakers on wheels, broadcasting messages.

Malaysia's National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015 found that the country has five million smokers aged 15 and above – about one-fifth of the population.

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proach has been successful but note that the decline in smoking rates in recent years has begun to stall. This has led to a debate over whether to allow e-cigarettes containing nicotine, which are banned unless a smoker has a medical prescription.

Some experts say e-cigarettes are less harmful than cigarettes and can help smokers quit. "We just want smokers to know that there is another option," Dr Colin Mendelsohn, an associate professor at the University of New South Wales, told 4BC Radio last month.

But the president of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Tony Bartone, has expressed support for the e-cigarette ban. He said last year there was a lack of data about the impact, warning that e-cigarettes risked "normalising" smoking without ensuring people eventually quit.

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Customers smoking by the roadside outside a Kuala Lumpur mamak restaurant, beyond the stipulated 3m from the roofed eatery. ST PHOTO: TRINNA LEONG

With fewer smokers lighting up in Japan and South Korea, non-smokers have also come to benefit.

A South Korean Health Ministry survey showed 12.7 per cent of non-smokers were exposed to indoor second-hand smoke at work in 2017, down from 14.7 per cent in 2013. The figure for indoor public spaces fell to 21.1 per cent from 58 per cent over the same period.

In Japan, where health issues associated with passive smoking are said to kill an estimated 15,000 people annually, a Health Ministry survey showed that 30.1 per cent of smokers were exposed to second-hand smoke at their workplace in 2017, down from 59.2 per cent in 2003.

The rate for eaters also fell – to 42.4 per cent in 2017 from a whopping 70.9 per cent in 2003 – but the impact, or lack thereof, of the new laws will remain to be seen.

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A "No Smoking On The Streets" sign in Tokyo's Chiyoda ward, the first of the Japanese capital's 23 wards to outlaw public smoking in 2002, with offenders facing fines of 2,000 yen (\$25). ST PHOTO: WALTER SIM

aged between 18 and 24, it went from 21.4 per cent to 15.4 per cent.

Still, implementation of the smoking ban remains patchy. Smokers can often be seen lighting up in public places, including at stations and airports.

Health campaigners believe the way forward is a total ban, including getting rid of designated smoking areas in hotels, restaurants, train stations and airports.

"The National Tobacco Control legislation does allow designated smoking areas (DSA) in restaurants with seating space of more than 30 and hotels with more than 30 rooms. Airports have smoking lounges. This is not the best practice to protect non-smokers. There have been (government) discussions to amend this loophole," said Dr Arora.

"The government did invite public suggestions to amend the National Tobacco Control legislation or Ciga-

rettes and Other Tobacco Products Act. Public health experts have suggested removing DSA to amend this loophole."

Many also believe that India's biggest problem is not cigarettes, but bidis and chewing tobacco, a highly prevalent practice. According to Gates, 1.99 million use smokeless tobacco, 100 million smoke tobacco and 32 million smoke as well as chew tobacco.

Said Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, surgeon and deputy director of Tata Memorial Centre in Mumbai: "Our bigger problem is bidi and smokeless (chewing) tobacco. Most bidi-smoking is in rural areas, where awareness of the law and enforcement is poor. There is no straitjacket approach for the tobacco problem. Each country has its unique problems. And we have ours."

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India Taking the shock and gore approach

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

The price of a 20-stick pack of Marlboro Lights is 300 rupees (\$5.90).

Four months ago, India



A drawing of Admiral Zheng He. During the Ming Dynasty, the admiral, a distant descendant of a Song-era Muslim Persian migrant, led the Ming's famous maritime voyages as far as Africa. PHOTO: MUZIUM MELAKA

Asia's history lessons for the world's future

Asia's history has seen empires wax and wane; people and civilisations of multiple cultures and faiths fight, trade with and intermarry one another. No single power has managed to dominate or absorb this syncretic region for long – and that is likely to remain.

Parag Khanna

For most of history prior to the Industrial Revolution, Asia far outstripped Europe on indicators of development, while Europe was a peripheral upstart. Trade across vast distances between the Mediterranean and China along the Silk Roads long predated Europe's 15th-century voyages.

From being an undiscovered continent prior to European colonialism, Africa and Eurasia were an integral part of the interconnected trading system. And well before Europe held any colonies as far as the Mongols presided over the largest territorial empire ever known.

These are just some of the facts of Asian history that have been lost over the past 500 years of colonialism and the Cold War, during which Asia became so fragmented that many societies have lost touch with the bonds that once tied them together. Due to the eurocentric nature of global history narratives, most Asians today are unfamiliar with the depth and contours of Asia's own history, especially its rich pre-colonial Silk Road era of commerce, conflict and cultural patterns across the sweep of terrain from Arabia to Japan.

Now more than ever, we need a clear understanding of Asia's past to re-establish Asia's central role in global history. European empires became wealthy global powers because they subjugated Asia and the United States' global influence today hinges on its relevance in Asia. Perhaps most important, Asians need to be reminded of what their collective historical achievements have been and consider what is possible in the future.

Here are some lessons from Asian history for Asia's future – and the world's.

CULTURE MATTERS

A panoramic arc of West, Central, South, East, and South-east Asian history going back thousands of years shows that Asia's linkages have been continuously propelled through commerce, conflict and culture. Turkic, Arab and Persian civilisations, as well as those of China, Japan and Korea, have been uninterruptedly accumulating and sharing knowledge for nearly 3,000 years.

The most basic example is language. Ancient Indian Sanskrit served as a model for written Thai, Tibetan and other regional languages, while in East Asia, the Chinese writing system came to Japan via Korea. The Arabic script became the basis of numerous oral traditions such as Farsi, Kurdish, Pashto and Urdu as they crys-

tallised into written languages. The linkages across the Turkic, Persian and Indic worlds have resulted in thousands of modern cognates between Turkish, Farsi and Hindi.

Linguistic influence also flowed from West to East: Persian, not Chinese, was the lingua franca of the Silk Roads. The Tang Dynasty set up Persian schools to train its traders and agents to communicate with their counterparts in the western regions.

Asian societies were also willing recipients of novel ideas at an integral part of the interconnected trading system. And well before Europe held any colonies as far as the Mongols presided over the largest territorial empire ever known.

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RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

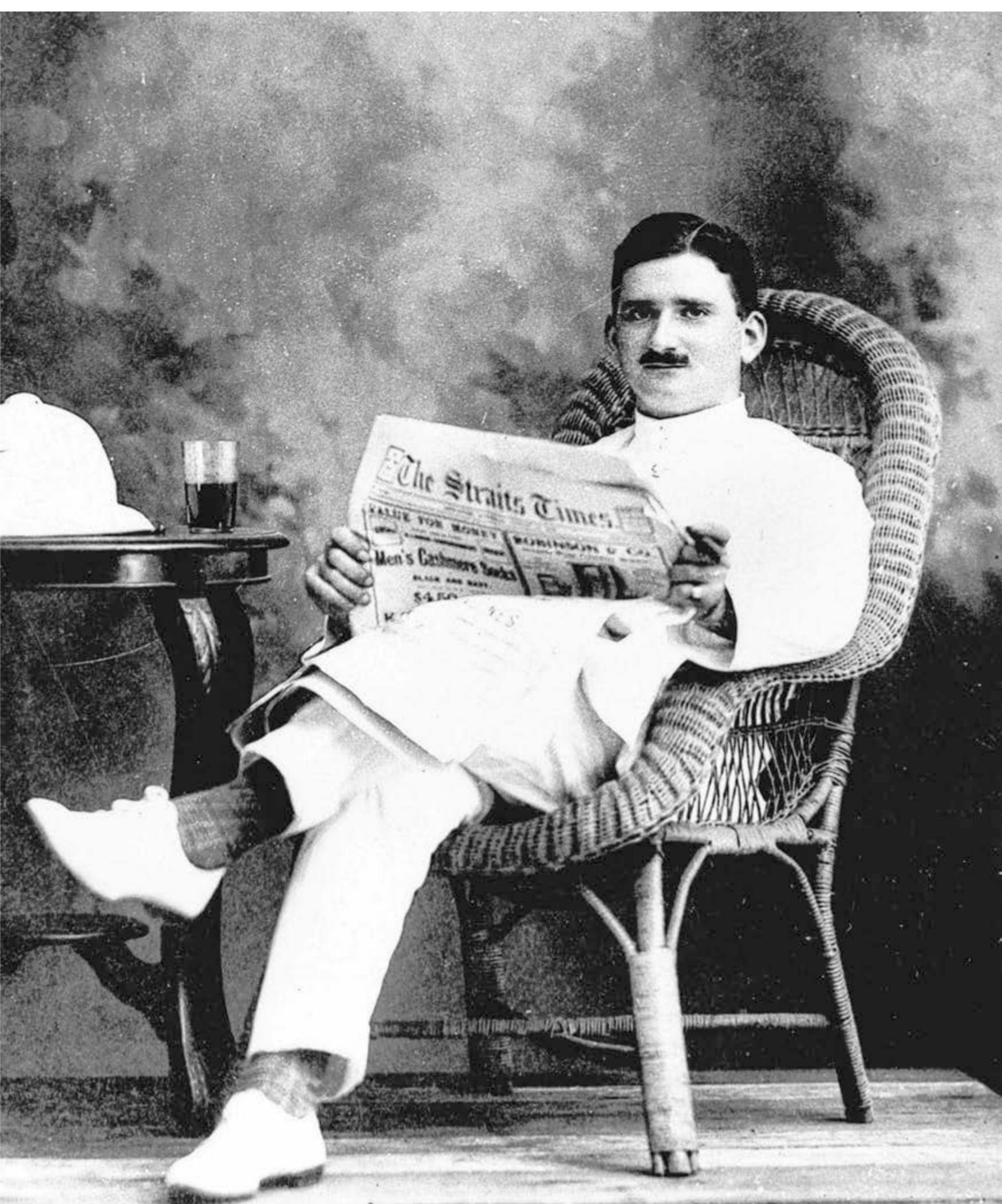
Religious diversity has also been a pillar of Asian civilisations' stability. Vedic Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism and Buddhism were established faiths centuries before the advent of Christianity, which along with Islam emerged from West Asia.

The Khmer Empire that dominated much of peninsular South-east Asia from the ninth to the 13th centuries was a Mahayana Buddhist Hindu dominion. The resplendent Angkor Wat in Cambodia became a Hindu temple in honour of the Lord Vishnu but by the 12th century had become a Buddhist temple. Even the nihilistic Pol Pot dared not desecrate it. Today, it is the only building on a national flag. The Srivijaya Empire of Sumatra was also a Hindu-Buddhist civilisation.

On top of this towering, South and South-east Asian culture cannot be explained without Islam, brought by Arab traders along maritime networks and its coexistence for more than 1,000 years with Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity.

These religions often coexisted in harmony as they adapted to local circumstances. Buddhism is inseparable from the religious and cultural psyche of East Asia, where Confucianism was also a common bond that provided a means through which elites could understand one another even when their relations were adversarial. In Tang China, it was declared that "Buddhism is the sun, Taoism is the moon and Confucianism is the earth".

The most basic example is language. Ancient Indian Sanskrit served as a model for written Thai, Tibetan and other regional languages, while in East Asia, the Chinese writing system came to Japan via Korea. The Arabic script became the basis of numerous oral traditions such as Farsi, Kurdish, Pashto and Urdu as they crys-



Colonialism's mix of capitalism, technology and manpower gave areas of Asia a head start into the modern world, says the writer. Hong Kong and Singapore became leading financial centres. PHOTO: CHOW KWAI FAI

moon, and Confucianism the five planets".

The early caliphates, Mongols, Mughals and Ottomans are all examples of Asian empires whose inclusive religious tolerance aided their expansion by reducing fear among their new subjects. Though discriminatory taxes were levied on minorities in many societies, in most cases they did not amount to persecution. The third Mughal emperor, Akbar, decreed that any Hindu converted to Islam could retain his Hinduism without penalty.

It is almost impossible to explain the historical role of faith with other Asian cultures, with communities of Arabs, Turks, Persians and Mongols across the sweep of terrain from Arabia to Japan.

Now more than ever, we need a clear understanding of Asia's past to re-establish Asia's central role in global history. European empires became wealthy global powers because they subjugated Asia and the United States' global influence today hinges on its relevance in Asia. Perhaps most important, Asians need to be reminded of what their collective historical achievements have been and consider what is possible in the future.

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Unlike in the 14th century, West Asia today looks up to East Asia's success – and is learning lessons from it on how to manage political Islam from near and far. PHOTO: BELMOND LA RESIDENCE D'ANGKOR

than London and Paris. Over many centuries, cities from Baghdad to Delhi to Chang'an served to exchange and revitalise knowledge from near and far.

In key areas of science and technology – irrigation and bridge building, clock making and gunsmithing, papermaking and navigation – Asia was the inventor and Europe acquired knowledge secondhand. Paper entered the Islamic domain after the Arab victory over the Tang in AD 751, after which imprisoned Chinese prisoners transmitted their skills to Muslim craftsmen in Baghdad and Damascus, then Egypt and Morocco, and eventually Spain and Italy.

COMPETITION FOR TERRITORIAL AND TRADE ROUTES

In each phase of Asian history, geopolitical competition for territory and trade routes expanded the reach and intensity of the whole system. Already in the 13th century, the Mongols managed to link much of the world known at the time. For numerous Song Chinese and South-east Asian maritime entrepôts, external trade was crucial to the survival of local economies. The Chola,

For Asians, Islam cannot be viewed as foreign and adversarial.

Though colonialism was a humiliating experience, it nonetheless provided a common layer on which Asians are now building a post-Western future. Asians are realising that they have much more to learn from one another than from the West. Ultimately, perhaps the greatest Western legacy will have been to accelerate the self-actualisation of Asia.

those of the United States. Asians should view Europeans' arrival and ascent in their terrain far more as the product of luck than ingenuity. Had it not been for the Ottomans' sacking of Constantinople and threatening of Europe from the east, Europe would have been less motivated to explore westward in search of East Asia (landing in America instead).

And had the Ming Dynasty not chosen to retreat inward in the late 15th century, it is unlikely that Europe's East India companies would ever have established advanced positions against the Ming fleets.

Europe thus gained the most from Asia's pre-modern globalisation, acquiring knowledge of weaponry and navigation from Asia that it used to trade routes opened by India and China. When Asians look at the colonial period, therefore, they see an era of complicity, not inferiority. Their collective lesson is that when they are in conflict with one another, outside powers will exploit them.

Colonialism's mix of capitalism, technology and manpower did, however, give areas of Asia a head start into the modern world. Hong Kong and Singapore became leading financial centres, drawing Asian migrants from near and far. Globalisation has brought oil deposits through joint ventures with Western companies, and railways helped forge a more united India subcontinent.

When it comes to migration, colonialism's lasting legacy has been to make Asia ever more Asian. European empires from the Portuguese to the British moved Malay and Indian merchants and slaves by the millions across the greater Indian Ocean realm. Steamship ferry services across the Bay of Bengal and South China Sea galvanised regional migration. At the same time, the pan-Asian anti-colonial movements of the 19th and 20th centuries inspired Asians to redistribute a common spatial and political edification of Asia.

Though colonialism was a humiliating experience, it nonetheless provided a common layer on which Asians are now building a post-Western future. Asians are realising that they have much more to learn from one another than from the West. Ultimately, perhaps the greatest Western legacy will have been to accelerate the self-actualisation of Asia.

ASIA AFTER THE WEST: USES AND ABUSES OF WESTERN EXPERIENCE

Given Asia's rich historical record of intercivilisational interactions, it is odd when Western scholars make analogies to European history to explain Asian states' behaviour. Is Germany's 19th-century rise better way to interpret India's ambitions today than a combination of Tang and Ming histories?

Should the United States really hold up India as a continental counterbalance to China when India's golden era was under the seafaring Chola Dynasty, which ruled the waves?

Can Iran be confined to its present national boundaries for much of history, Persian empires reached the Mediterranean Sea?

Since we are talking about China, India and Iran, surely it makes more sense to assume that Chinese, Indians and Iranians think and act more through analogies with their own histories than with the West's.

For most of history, then, Asians have been far more aroused by one another's imperial ambitions, especially the expansionist Arabs, Mongols and Ottomans, among others. Until the 16th century, the West remained on the sidelines of the thriving Asian system, and before 1800, trade flows among Chinese, Indians, Japanese, Siamese, Javanese and Arabs were still much greater than those within Europe.

Only in recent centuries have Western societies actually been a geopolitical concern in Asia. Yet even as European empires persisted into the 20th century, it was Japan that besieged the Pacific Rim from Vladivostok to Darwin.

Today, despite religious differences, India's and China's ties with the Gulf Arabs, Iran and Russia are getting stronger with each passing year of military and commercial cooperation. Confucian and Muslim societies at opposite ends of Asia have little to fear from each other. They form not a geopolitical axis but a restoration of the Silk Road commercial axis.

but a restoration of the Silk Road commercial axis.

A similar logic applies in the geographic domain. Whereas European history features consistent fear of a singular regional hegemon, Asia's geography makes it inherently multipolar.

Natural barriers absorb friction. Vast distances, high mountains, and other natural boundaries such as rivers protect Asians from excessive encroachment on one another.

Taken together, the combination of geography, ethnicity and culture has significantly contributed to Asia's recent wars among neighbouring powers – China and India, China and Vietnam, India and Pakistan, Israel and Iran – ending in stalemate.

And whereas European history teaches that wars occur when there is a convergence in power among rivals, in Asia, wars occur when there is a perception of significant advantage over rivals. Thus the more powerful China's neighbours such as India, Japan and Russia grow, the less likely conflict among them becomes.

To the extent that Western scholarship uses Asian analogies to divine the future, it often chooses the wrong ones. The most common is to suggest that Asia's future will resemble China's tributary system, which operated primarily from the late 16th to mid-19th centuries, during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

And whereas the geographic scope of the tributary model never reached meaningfully beyond East Asia. Furthermore, the tributary system revolved around trade; China exercised minimal political or military hegemony.

China has never been an indomitable superpower presiding over all of Asia like a colossus. Western theoretical abstractions paint a false choice for Asia between hegemony and anarchy, whereas the reality is much more rooted in Asia's multivilisational, multipolar past.

There are, however, Western colonial influences that have been left behind in the fabric of the region, perhaps only slowly (if at all) to be returned, through the joint venture with Western companies, to the West.

The most pertinent questions for Asia are about neither ideology nor hegemony, but rather about how to demarcate and share the high stakes of these conflicts.

According to art historian

John Warne Monroe

After years of steadfast resistance, the French government declared on Nov 23 that it would return 26 sculptures and other artefacts to the Republic of Benin, a nation in West Africa formerly colonised by France. This move, ordered directly by President Emmanuel Macron, is not just a policy reversal – it also marks a startling break with a chauvinistic national self-conception.

As Mr Macron himself has put it, France is among the very few countries in the world "obsessed with universality", what he admitted some might see as a "pretension" to speak on behalf of the whole of humanity".

It is a telling choice of words: "obsessed" and "pretension". Unlike his predecessors, Mr Macron is willing to acknowledge the dark side of France's past as a "universal power" – and to seek ways of making amends for it.

The French government summarily rejected the claim, citing a law that declared property in the national museums to be "inalienable". But President Macron has changed this story. He committed to a report on the issue from Serge Gainsbourg's economist Félix Sarr and French historian Béatrice Savoy.

They have come out emphatically in favour of restitution. Invoking the brutal legacy of colonialism, Mr Sarr and Professor Savoy argue that responding positively to such requests will do much to foster "future equitable relations" between France and its former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa.

This new cultural policy is disturbing to many in the art world. Mr Didier Rykner, founder of the website La Tribune de l'Art, worries that it will open a Pandora's box of restitution claims from other parts of the world.

Mr Jean-Jacques Aillagon, a former director of the Louvre, has called for as far as to denounce the Sarr-Savoy report as "the law of eye for an eye in cultural diplomacy" and, therefore, a threat to the "progress of universal civilisation".

The terms of the debate can sound forbiddingly abstract. On one side is "universal civilisation", and on the other is what Mr Sarr and Prof Savoy call "a new relational ethics between peoples".

What is at issue, however, is concrete: not only the fate of some 90,000 objects, but also an enduring conception of France's place in the world.

The opponents of restitution are drawing on a vision of French identity with roots in the Revolution of 1789. If France is founded on the principles of equality, freedom and human rights, it has a special mission in the world as a model of "civilisation" from which all peoples can draw inspiration. In this view, maintaining objects from elsewhere in French museums is safeguarding them for the good of humanity as a whole.

Advocates of restitution see things differently. The idea of "universal civilisation" itself, they contend, is a Western invention, not a fact. Proclaiming that rulers' connection to God, of iron and war, Dahomey's conquest by France was part of the so-called scramble for Africa that took place from 1881 to 1914.

The kingdom's location between what would become German Tonaland and British Nigeria made it a key strategic asset for the French, who established a foothold in the region after a brief war in 1890. After four years and two wars, it became part of the French empire.

The French first encountered the iron figure in the early stages of their 1892 invasion, when they captured the port city of Ouidah. It seems likely that the figure had been moved there to lend its symbolic power to the city's defences. Eugene Fonssagrives, a French captain, seized it as a spoil and donated it to the French nation in 1894.

For years thereafter, the figure was displayed in Paris at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero. At first, it was most notable as a trophy from a war vividly covered in the French penny press. Illustrated papers had regaled readers with stories of the gigantic but "cruel" Dahomeyans, soldiers who cut off the hands of their enemies.

Today, the figure is an icon of the avant-garde. Picasso saw it during the 1907 visit that changed the history of Western art by inspiring the painting Les Demoiselles d'Avignon. Writing in 1912, Guillaume Apollinaire, a leading advocate of Cubism, proclaimed the figure "without doubt the most unexpected and graceful work of art to be seen in Paris".

Over the course of the 20th century – and especially after 1945, as the French empire began to disintegrate and French global political power waned – it became increasingly tempting to see France as the sole inheritor of acknowledgement of African art's aesthetic value as another triumph of the nation's famous capacity to "speak on behalf of the whole of humanity".

Will it lay the groundwork for a new kind of openness to the world? Or will it encourage a turn inwards, a sense that France should keep to itself rather than welcoming foreigners and borrowing creatively from them, as it has done so fruitfully in the past?

WASHINGTON POST

John Warne Monroe is associate professor of history at Iowa State University and author of the forthcoming book, *Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture And The Imperial French Invention Of Primitive Art*.

France faces up to dark side of its imperial past

Insight

After years of steadfast resistance, the French government declared on Nov 23 that it would return 26 sculptures and other artefacts to the Republic of Benin, a nation in West Africa formerly colonised by France. This move, ordered directly by President Emmanuel Macron, is not just a policy reversal – it also marks a startling break with a chauvinistic national self-conception.

As Mr Macron himself has put it, France is among the very few countries in the world "obsessed with universality", what he admitted some might see as a "pretension" to speak on behalf of the whole of humanity".



A man driving blindfolded for the Bird Box challenge. Netflix has warned fans against participating in the potentially dangerous online challenge inspired by its recent horror film, where survivors of a post-apocalyptic America must wear blindfolds to prevent exposure to deadly supernatural forces. PHOTO: YOUTUBE/BMO F

What's Trending

Bird Box fans take to dangerous fad blindly

Videos circulating online show some going about their chores blindfolded – with three even driving



Ong Hwee Hwee

Digital Editor

If you thought jumping out of moving cars to dance or eating laundry detergent pods was pure madness, brace yourself for more baffling viral trends this year.

Just two days into the new year, Netflix had to remind fans of horror film Bird Box about the dangers of walking around blindfolded.

Yes, you heard it right.

People have plunged with their eyes closed right into the first social media fad of 2019 – the Bird Box challenge.

Thousands have posted videos of themselves doing things – including driving – blindfolded, mimicking Sandra Bullock's character in the recent Netflix hit.

Bullock plays a single mother trying to save herself and her two children in a post-apocalyptic America.

She and the other survivors must wear blindfolds to prevent exposure to supernatural forces which could lead them to take their own lives.

Netflix said 45 million of its subscribers had streamed Bird Box in its first week of release, a record for original movie content on the platform.

But even the streaming giant was taken aback by how fans were re-enacting its scenes in real life.

"Can't believe I have to say this, but: PLEASE DO NOT HURT YOURSELVES WITH THIS BIRD BOX CHALLENGE," Netflix tweeted last Wednesday.

"We don't know how this started, and we appreciate the love, but Boy and Girl have just one wish for 2019 and it is that you not end up in the hospital due to memes," it added, referring to the two unnamed children of Bullock's character.

Videos circulating online show people trying to go about their daily activities – taking a walk, shopping for groceries and playing

basketball – blindfolded. In one video, an adult and two young children were seen running around the house. One of the children ran right into a wall.

YouTube star Morgan Adams extended it into a 24-hour challenge, which saw her visiting the mall and riding the escalator with an eye mask on. The clip garnered over 2.5 million views.

Some were totally blind to the obvious dangers involved. At least three videos show people driving with blindfolds on.

"So people are blindfolding themselves as a game? You were right, we are yearning for some sort of disaster," Twitter user Kirsten commented.

Some responded with sarcasm. "Witness and be amazed at this stunning display of human intellect!" said YouTube user John Doe.

Twitter user Shellytrep added: "I mean we also have to tell people not to eat laundry soap, what do you expect?"

It is not the first time that warnings had to be issued to rein in potentially dangerous viral challenges.

Last year, the United States' National Transportation Safety Board took to Facebook to warn people about the dangers of the Kiki Challenge, which involved people jumping out of a moving car to dance to Canadian artist Drake's song, In My Feelings.

When the Tide Pod challenge went viral, the American Association of Poison Control Centres had to state the obvious: Laundry detergent pods are not meant to be eaten.

Some chose to partake in the latest craze in a safer way, like KFC Singapore which posted on Facebook a meme of a blindfolded Bullock hugging a bucket of fried chicken.

If you still think it is a good idea to try the Bird Box challenge, Twitter user Glen Scott has a sensible suggestion.

"I'm doing my own #BirdBoxChallenge, it involves napping at one in the afternoon. Who's with me?!"

DRIVING FINE SPARKS 'I CAN DO IT IN A MONK ROBE' TWITTER STORM

In Japan, a controversy involving another kind of "dangerous" driving has erupted online.

It all started after a monk was fined 6,000 yen (\$575) for driving in his traditional robe.

The monk, who is in his 40s, was driving to a Buddhist memorial service when he was stopped by a police officer in Fukui prefecture in September last year.

"You can't drive in that kimono," the officer reportedly told him, adding that the sleeves and hem of his robe were too long for driving.

The monk, who said he has been



Monks across Japan posted pictures of themselves juggling and skipping in their robes in support of a monk stopped by a police officer who thought wearing the garb made driving dangerous. PHOTOS: TWITTER/TOSSYAN753, HENMORITY

ONLY ONLINE

The week's top 3 picks at straitstimes.com



VIDEO:

Hangout with ST

We discuss last week's hottest topics, such as the Orchard Road smoking ban, and read out viewers' New Year resolutions.

str.sg/hangout45



VIDEO:

Bubble tea boom

From South Africa to Russia, bubble tea is now an industry worth over \$60 billion worldwide.

str.sg/bubble-tea

INTERACTIVE:

First meals of 2019

Many shared with us photos of their first meal of the year on Instagram.

str.sg/firstmeal2019

NOTABLE TRENDS

#CHANGE4: For the first time in history, China landed a robotic spacecraft – the Chang'e-4, named after the Moon goddess in Chinese mythology – on the far side of the Moon.

R. KELLY: Allegations of abuse and sexual misconduct against the R&B artist were back in the spotlight as a new documentary series revisits the accusations which Kelly has denied.

NANCY PELOSI: California Democrat Nancy Pelosi, 78, has again been elected Speaker in the US House of Representatives – the third most powerful role in Washington.

driving in his robe for 20 years without any problem, refused to pay the fine. He and his sect also protested that such rules would interfere with their daily activities, reported Yomiuri Shimbun. Many monks in Japan drive in their robes. While the Fukui prefectural government's traffic rules prohibit

driving a vehicle in clothes that may affect safe driving, not all Buddhist monk robes are considered a violation of the rule.

Some also questioned: If driving in long dresses and skirts is perfectly legal, what is wrong with driving in robes?

In the past week, other monks have started to post pictures and videos under a Japanese Twitter hashtag, which means "I can do it in a monk robe", to prove how agile they can be while in full garb.

Some showed off their rope-jumping skills, while others juggled bowling pins and wielded lightsabres.

Mr Tetsuya Hangai, a 29-year-old monk in Fukushima prefecture, posted a video of himself juggling sticks in a black robe. "I can move a lot even in a robe and driving in it isn't a problem at all," he tweeted.

The videos left Twitter users impressed, with one commenting: "I can't even do this in jeans and a T-shirt!"

Meanwhile, the monk who refused to pay the fine may face charges.

But he said he would stand his ground. "I'd like to clearly state at trial that I can drive safely in a monk robe."

hwee@sph.com.sg

#OpinionOfTheDay

My love-hate relationship with innovations and sharing economy



Yuen Sin

Ten months ago, I professed in this column my love for shared bike services in Singapore, how these bright yellow and orange bicycles have given me a newfound sense of agency as a commuter by bridging the last-mile connectivity gap.

It is now 2019, and older and wiser, I take my words back.

Just like many other Singaporeans who have abandoned these services, my love affair with the likes of Bike and ofo is officially over.

While these bikes used to be ubiquitous in most neighbourhoods, making it so easy for me to get from point to point with the apps that I have on hand, poor maintenance and regulatory constraints have made it a lot harder to locate a working bike these days.

In June last year, oBike crashed out of Singapore, owing more than 200,000 users here almost \$9 million in unrefunded deposits. Not only did I fail to get my \$49 deposit back, but I am now experiencing the same sense of déjà vu with ofo, which appears to be in similarly poor financial straits – and owes me \$40.

I sent them an e-mail about two weeks ago to ask for a refund. I am still waiting for a response.

As a consumer, I now feel more wary about forking out money to other disruptors.

For instance, promotions for GrabPay can be seen in many shops these days, inviting you to put money into e-wallets which can then be converted into credits – you can store up to \$999 worth of credits in your account.

Virtual mobile telco Circles.Life has been sending me multiple e-mails lately, telling me that I can get a cashback of \$120 – \$10 every month in the coming year – if I choose to break my contract with my current telco and switch to their service.

But a nagging feeling at the back of my mind stops me from responding to these overtures, as irrational as this may seem – what if such business models somehow become unsustainable, and I can't get my money back?

The cynic in me wants to reject these new digital entrants altogether and mourn the passing of an analogue way of life that is less fraught with uncertainty when it comes to the question of whether a new service or product will be here to stay for good.

And don't get me started on data privacy too – my Facebook account has already been compromised once last year, which has also made me more conscious of how much personal data I have to hand to a company that I do not know if I can trust each time I sign up for a new app.

Feeling cheated and jaded after their experiences with ofo, some of my friends on Facebook have been sharing a quote from ofo's acting general manager, who was reported in Today as telling staff in an internal memo to "appreciate" the start-up experience amid the company's financial struggles. To them, it seemed like the manager was being unsympathetic about the plight of employees who had been left in the lurch.

However, I found his comment to be a sobering reminder of the uncertainty for both consumers and employees in today's sharing economy.

In March last year, I had made

plans to catch up with an old friend from university on a Saturday. The night before, however, he asked for a rain check, saying that something had cropped up.

When I opened the newspaper pages the following Monday, I found out – indirectly – what had happened. His employer, Uber, had been acquired by rival Grab and he would be losing his job. He had probably been busy commiserating with his team, taking in the news and preparing to move out of the office.

Far from being bitter or resentful, my friend took the upheaval in his stride. After taking a short break, he found a new role at another tech start-up and seems upbeat about his future in the new company.

Compared with my friend, who lost his job because of this acquisition, or Singapore's ofo employees, who have been reportedly owed thousands of dollars in unpaid claims, I should be thankful that I do not have to worry about next month's pay cheque or the prospect of my company suddenly going under.

Thinking about my friend's experience also reminded me that while change and disruption come with risks, they can also lead to growth and opportunities.

On balance, services offered by other companies that have a more financially sustainable model, and which have proven to have a strong track record over the last few years, have greatly enriched my life as a consumer.

The rise of low-cost airlines and apartment-renting company Airbnb has made travel much more affordable. Once, I lost my wallet in a Grab car but managed to get it back from the driver, thanks to the app which keeps records of your past rides.

And streaming service Netflix has been continually innovating and coming up with impressive offerings, from Singapore-born film-maker Sandi Tan's Oscar-shortlisted documentary *Shirkers* to a sophisticated choose-your-own-adventure interactive movie called *Bandersnatch*.

Rather than rejecting innovative services, I should be learning how to be a more discerning consumer to better protect myself. As an employee in a disrupted sector, I should also learn how to go with the flow as we experiment with new ways of working in the office.

I probably won't get on another shared bike again in the near future, but I recently saw some new e-scooter services sprouting up near Marina Bay Sands that I am very much tempted to try. And guess what? They are deposit-free.

yuensin@sph.com.sg

• #opinionoftheday is a column for younger writers in the newsroom to write about issues that matter to them and their peers.

Rather than rejecting innovative services, I should be learning how to be a more discerning consumer to better protect myself. As an employee in a disrupted sector, I should also learn how to go with the flow as we experiment with new ways of working in the office.

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OBITUARIES



Chue Wai Seen

Age: 90

Passed away peacefully on 4 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Chan Cheak Tin (deceased)

Sons:
Dr Chan Siew Tung
Chan Siew Leong
Chan Siew Koon
Chan Siew Chung
Daughters:
Chan Lai Yee (deceased)
Chan Ching Yee (deceased)
Chan Mee Yee
Grandsons:
Dr Chan Chee Hoe
Chan Chee Whye
Chan Chee Hon
Chan Chee Heng
Chan Chee Yong
Chan Chee Yin
Chan Peng Yoon
Granddaughters:
Chan Sook Chun Ashlyn
Chan Sook Teng
Chan Sook Ning

Daughters-in-law:
Dr Ong Bee Ping
Adeline Yong Chooi Yoke
Ho Lye Guen
Tan Bee Hua May
Son-in-law:
Tan Tywee
Granddaughter-in-law:
Michelle Shiu Ting Cheng

Grandson-in-law:
Tang Qi Kun Charles
Greatgrandsons:
Chan Hong Jie Jedd Asher
Chan Jing Yuen Jayden
Greatgranddaughters:
Chan Yu Hui Keira Anne
Alyssa Tang Shi En

All relatives and friends.
Wake is held at Singapore Casket Level 3, Jade Hall,
131 Lavender Street, Singapore 338737.
Cortege leaves on Wednesday 9 January 2019 at 2.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 3.00pm.

"I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, and I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me on that Day..."
2 Timothy 4:7-8



Margaret Lim Chai Hong

Age: 67

Was called home to be with the Lord on 4 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Terence Chin

Children: Chen Shengming Vincent
Chen Jieming Xavier
Chen HuiXian Jasmine
Grandson: Chen Zheyu Jarrell
Siblings: Peter Lim Geok Lin
Susan Lim Siew Heng
Maggie Lim Chye Wah
Steven Lim Geok Chuan (deceased)
Steven Lim Geok Kuan
Janet Lim Siew Kuan
Godsister: Ang Poh Luan

And all relatives and friends.
Wake is held at Block 118 Bedok North Street 2,
Singapore 460118.

Nightly prayers will be held at 8.00pm.
Cortege leaves on Tuesday 8 January 2019 at 8.00am for
Funeral Mass at Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour,
31 Siglap Hill, Singapore 456085 at 11.30am, thereafter to
Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 1.40pm.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
Psalm 23:6



Tony Fong Ban Yew

Age: 60

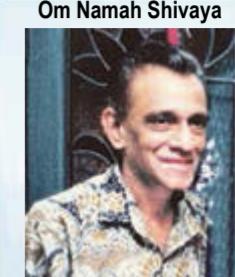
Was called home to be with the Lord on 4 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Tan Kah Hoong

Son: Jeremy Fong Si Yong
Brothers: Fong Ban Meng
Fong Ban Lee
Alan Fong Ban Huat
Nieces: Melissa Fong Shi Yun, Magdalene Fong Xue Yun
Stefanie Fong Su-Wei and Natalie Fong Su-Ann

In-laws, nephews, nieces, all relatives and friends.
Wake is held at Block 135 Serangoon North Avenue 2,
Singapore 550135.

Night service on Monday 7 January 2019 at 8.00pm.
Cortege leaves on Tuesday 8 January 2019 at 8.00am for
Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 9.00am.



Letchiman s/o Perimal

Age: 71

Passed away peacefully on
5 January 2019, dearly missed
and fondly remembered by loved ones.

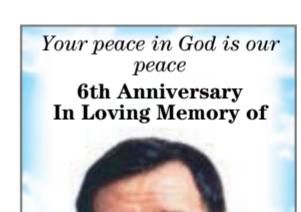
Wife: Letchimi
Daughters & Sons-in-law:
Vasantha @ Nadiah & Wan Faisal
Jaya Chitra & Palamurungan
Sarath & Shanthi
Grandchildren:
Wan Farhan, Wan Syafiqah,
Rhuben Naathan, Prisha Thanya
and Alisha Pranavi
And all relatives and friends:
Appa is resting at Block 44
Bendemeer Road (MPH),
Singapore 330044.
Cortege leaves on Sunday
6 January 2019 at 4.30pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1
for cremation at 6.30pm.
Tel: 9625 0495



Wong Liang Kwan 黃良冠

Age: 93

Passed away peacefully on
4 January 2019. Dearly missed
and fondly remembered by loved ones.
Wife: Lake Sow Fong (Deceased)
Daughter: Wong Pui Mun, Grace
Sons & Daughters-in-law:
Wong Wai Chong, Andy
Wong Wai Keong, Nelson
& Goh Guah Lin, Linda
Wong Wai Geik, Alfrin
& La Lum Leng, Cynthia
Grandchildren:
Wake at Singapore Casket Level 4,
Topaz Hall, 131 Lavender Street,
Singapore 338737.
Cortege leaves on Monday
7 January 2019 at 11.45am
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4
for cremation at 12.45pm



Mr Alan Lim

Departed on 4 January 2019

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Management Committee,
Management & Staff and Members of

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And whose lids are
closed in sleep.



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Invest

Key investment themes for 2019

Experts say a global recession is unlikely, and volatility could offer opportunities for investors



Lorna Tan

Invest Editor

The new year is only a few days old but the jitters and volatility that marked the end of 2018 have already reared their ugly heads, signalling that investors will need to stay sharp over these 12 months.

The key concerns have a familiar ring as well – trade tensions between the United States and China, political risks across a range of countries and rising interest rates.

Financial experts say that while a global recession is unlikely, slowing growth is on the cards.

But volatility could present opportunities, so retail investors should keep some cash on hand to take advantage.

Mr Vasu Menon, OCBC's vice-president and senior investment strategist, wealth management Singapore, notes that there was a tug-of-war between bulls and bears last year, with the bears eventually gaining the upper hand after global uncertainties hit market sentiment.

Last year, Wall Street posted its worst yearly showing since the global financial crisis, with both the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average recording their biggest annual losses since 2008.

Closer to home, the benchmark Straits Times Index (STI) plunged 10 per cent last year to close at 3,068.76 on the final trading day of the year. Other Asian markets took similar hits. This was in stark contrast to the STI's 18 per cent surge in 2017 when investors enjoyed a non-stop bull run.

The Sunday Times highlights the key investment themes for this year and offers tips to investors.

Global recession unlikely

Mr Taimur Baig, chief economist at DBS Bank, says a global recession is "very unlikely".

"As long as political risks don't exacerbate trade and investment drastically, we are far from a recession," he adds.

"Global liquidity is still ample, interest rates are relatively low, declining oil prices offer critical support to many emerging markets (particularly India and Indonesia), and despite the noise coming from the United States, global trade is still humming."

Mr Baig says the global economy will likely expand by 3.5 per cent this year on the back of somewhat slower but still strong growth in the world's two largest economies, the US and China.

Meanwhile, Singapore's official forecast for this year is for growth of between 1.5 and 3.5 per cent.

Standard Chartered Bank (Standard) and investment management firm Pimco put the probability of a US recession over the next 12 months at 30 per cent.

Stanchart, which uses a scorecard approach incorporating a wide array of factors to assess such a risk, says there are not many signals flashing red.

Mr Sumeet Bhambri, the bank's regional head of wealth management, Asean and South Asia, notes that the US economy accelerated last year, boosted by robust consumption and a pick-up in business investment on the back of late-2017 tax cuts. If this cycle stretches until the second quarter of this year, it would be the longest US expansion in modern history.

The combination of slowing but



Top stock picks

	Target price (\$)
DBS	
CapitaLand Mall Trust	2.44
ComfortDelGro	2.56
Genting Singapore	1.55
Mapletree Logistics Trust	1.50
NetLink Trust	0.87
ST Engineering	4.15
StarHub	2.45
Thai Beverage	0.87
UOB	29.50
YangtzeJiang Shipbuilding	1.82
OCBC	
CapitaLand	3.96
DBS	30.83
Frasers Centrepoint Trust	2.50
Frasers Logistics and Industrial Trust	1.19
Keppel DC Reit	1.48
Mapletree North Asia Commercial Trust	1.34
NetLink Trust	0.90
Sats	5.34
Singapore Airlines	10.71
Singtel	3.95
ST Engineering	3.95
UOB	28.80
UOL	8.41

Sources: DBS, OCBC

SUNDAY TIMES GRAPHICS

still robust growth, and slightly above-target inflation, implies the US Federal Reserve is likely to hike rates at a slower pace than last year, says Mr Bhambri.

Mr Anthony Raza, head of multi-asset strategy at UOB Asset Management, says there is a less than 10 per cent chance of a recession this year, but that probability increases to around 50 per cent in 2020.

"The increase in probability is due to two reasons," he adds.

"First, we expect US stimulus to reduce significantly by 2020, which will trigger a slowdown in global markets. Second, the US labour market is already past full employment and, as such, could face inflationary pressures. While inflation risks are not imminent, they may start to build up by 2020."

Top investment themes this year

1. ASIA EX-JAPAN EQUITIES

Mr Menon notes that a key upshot of the sell-off last year is that valuations have returned to more reasonable levels.

"Cheaper valuations on the back of a benign macro-economic outlook, a still supportive policy environment and robust earnings growth have opened opportunities for market entry. Asia ex-Japan equities look attractive – an estimated 2019 price-earnings (PE) ratio at 10.9 times."

FSMOne.com notes that as a large portion of the known negatives out there are already factored in, investors have an opportunity to take advantage of lower prices now.

"We target a PE ratio of 13.5 times for the MSCI Asia ex-Japan index by end-2020, which translates to a total return of 23.9 per cent from current levels," it adds.

2. GLOBAL HEALTHCARE

Mr Hou Wey Fook, chief investment officer at DBS, says global healthcare is a defensive play amid rising volatility. The sector's earnings have been relatively stable through the cycles and it is supported by tailwinds, including an ageing population and a strong pipeline of new prescription drugs.

3. CONSUMPTION PATTERN

DBS also sees winners in the "Live, Work, and Play" transition happening globally. Changing social, demographic and technological factors are shifting consumption patterns in a huge way, thus reshaping the way we live, work and play.

4. MILLENNIAL ATHLEISURE

Mr Hou is bullish about the millennial athleisure wave as the bank believes this group will impact consumption patterns in a profound way. With millennials' embrace of wellness as a way of life, companies catering to this demand will be a beneficiary. Demand for athleisure is highly resilient as it becomes the "new casual", he adds.

perform developed market shares in the medium term.

FSMOne.com's research team says bonds are worth looking at – emerging market ones have spreads at 4.2 per cent while Asian high-yield bonds are at 6.1 per cent.

"Barring any unexpected rise in defaults over the next two years or any significant adverse developments, investors are well compensated for risks with the current valuation levels as they have improved from where they were a year ago," it says.

6. ASIA DIVIDEND-YIELDING STOCKS

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8 tips for retail investors

FROM B16

Advice for retail investors

The start of a year is a good time to review your investment portfolio. It is important to have a clear view of your financial goals and risk appetite before making investment decisions, says Ms Chung.

FMSOne.com advises that you stick to your investment horizon and plan accordingly.

"We could see higher volatility this year and those with higher risk appetite and longer investment horizon could take this opportunity to add on to their investment positions," it says.

Investors with a more conservative profile could look into buying investment-grade bonds and short-term duration bonds. A defensive allocation towards European and US equities by reducing portfolio allocation would be well advised."

Here are eight tips:

1. DON'T PUT ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET

Given the uncertainties and volatility ahead, 2019 is not a year to take concentrated bets or speculate in markets. A multi-asset strategy that focuses on diversification across securities and asset classes is something to consider, advises Mr Menon.

Ms Chung notes that rising interest rates will bring changes to the investment landscape, making certain asset classes more attractive than others. So you should reassess your investments to ensure that the portfolio remains well diversified to mitigate against any volatility.

"Investors should avoid a portfolio that is heavy on bonds and look to opportunities in equities, in particular, global-quality equities and emerging market equities," she adds.

"Global-quality equities typically have higher return on equity, stable earnings growth and lower financial leverage. As a result, they tend to outperform the broader equity markets over longer investment cycles."

Stanchart's Mr Bhambri says that within equities, the bank prefers US stocks. And within this, it opts for energy, healthcare and tech; energy, healthcare and industrials in the euro area; and tech, discretionary, financials and utilities in China.

2. CASH WARCHEST

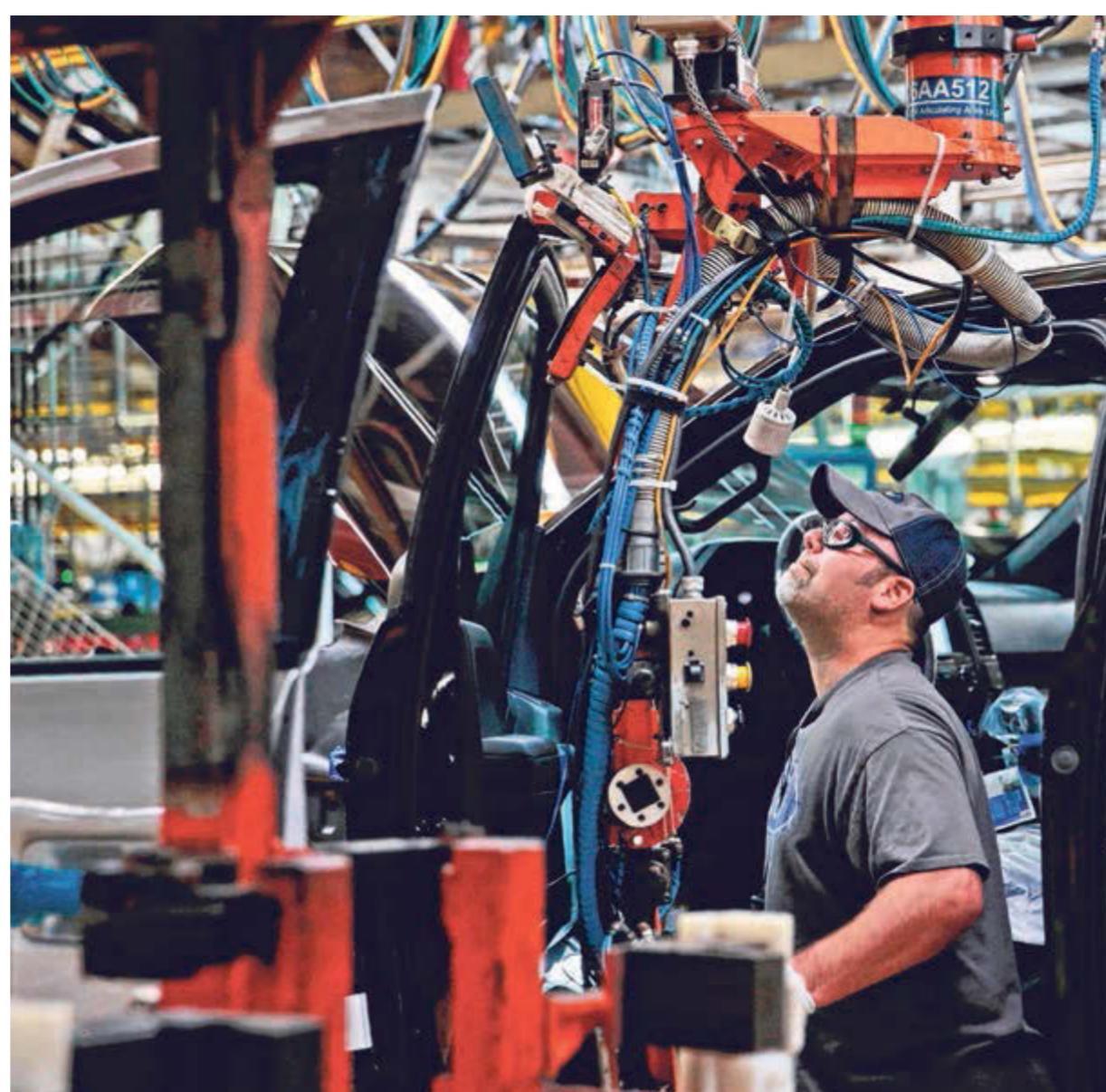
Besides staying diversified across asset classes, hold above-average levels of cash and be ready to redeploy this to more volatile assets, including equities, as opportunities emerge, says Mr Bhambri.

Market volatility, which could increase this year, is not all bad and can create opportunities, so investors ought to keep some dry powder.

However, be sure to do your homework and invest in quality companies with good fundamentals and which are well placed to withstand an economic slowdown.

Managing risk is especially important this year, adds Mr Menon.

He also warns investors not to swing to the other extreme, lose hope and hold too much cash, as there are reasons to be constructive on markets and it is best to stay invested, although it is important to



An assembly line at a Ford Motor Company complex in Michigan. The probability of a US recession over the next 12 months is 30 per cent, say some analysts. Others note that the US economy accelerated last year, boosted by robust consumption and a pick-up in business investment on the back of late-2017 tax cuts. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

invest carefully, especially when several headwinds look apparent.

3. DOLLAR-COST AVERAGING

Portfolio diversification across assets and sectors or stock segments can extend to timing the market as well, says Singapore Exchange market strategist Geoff Howie.

"For instance, rather than lump-sum investing, investors may choose to dollar-cost average, that is, commit fixed-dollar amounts to an asset or segment at fixed regular intervals," he adds.

Mr Menon suggests that investors embark on a regular plan by buying gradually over the next 12 months or longer by spacing investments out at regular intervals, in-

stead of trying to time the markets.

This dollar-cost averaging strategy effectively allows you to time-diversify your investments and ensures that you still have funds to participate in markets if there are intermittent sharp market corrections, he adds.

4. BARBELL APPROACH

A tug-of-war between bulls and bears will result in higher volatility and a non-trending environment for broad market indices, notes Mr Hou.

DBS suggests investors use a barbell strategy to maximise risk-return. This means constructing portfolios that are heavily weighted at both ends of the risk spectrum –

with long-term growth themes at one end and stable income-generating assets on the other.

"We are broadly neutral on equities. After a 10-year, US-led bull market, we believe global equities are entering into a more volatile, less-trending market this year," he says.

"Within equities, we favour US equities for growth and Asia equities for value. We are also overweight cash in our asset allocation."

5. SHORT-TERM MARKET SWINGS

Traders have very different objectives to investors, so Mr Howie advises that they seek to participate in the short-term swings of the more elastic stocks.

"For the majority of 2018, a hand-

ful of STI stocks – Yangzijiang Shipbuilding, Golden-Agri Resources, Venture Corporation, Genting Singapore and Hutchison Port Holdings Trust – averaged daily trading ranges of more than 2 per cent," he notes.

6. QUALITY ASSETS

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. So focus on quality assets as market conditions get increasingly challenging.

Mr Menon says due diligence is key as investors should focus on firms that possess robust balance sheets and good earnings visibility. At the very least, doing so offers peace of mind that these assets are better able to ride out tough times and thrive in good times.

"It's often unwise to sacrifice long-term stability for short-term bumps in one's core portfolio," he adds.

"Just recall the painful episode of the Singapore-dollar high-yield junk bond defaults of late 2016 if you need to be convinced. To that end, due diligence is utterly essential as is the process of review and re-allocation."

7. STOCKS

Mr Howie notes that in September last year, Malaysia's Primary Industries Minister Teresa Kok Sub Sim stated that the rubber industry was expected to become the No. 1 commodity contributor to the country's economy.

Singapore lists multiple stocks with a rubber focus, with activities spanning manufacturing to distribution. Two of the stocks, China Sunshine Chemical Holdings and Top Glove Corp, have been among Singapore's 20 best-performing stocks last year," he adds.

8. REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Investors need to be realistic about their expectations. With the economy slowing, interest rates rising, central banks tightening monetary policy, profit margins facing pressure from rising wages, trade protectionism and geopolitical risks in many parts of the world, one thing is certain – the exceptional returns we have been seeing may be a thing of the past, says Mr Menon.

"Returns are likely to moderate along with growth and single-digit returns seem more realistic than double-digit gains," he adds.

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Guest Chef
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21 to 25 January 2019
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For January's edition of 4 Hands Kitchen, Chef Steve Allen of Pollen will host one Michelin-starred Chef Renato Favaro of Como from Luxembourg. Coming together for the first time, both chefs will bring their wealth of experience in a combustion of flavours, drawing influence from their culinary journeys that spans from Europe to Asia.

Experience the combined culinary mastery of two talented chefs as they celebrate the integrity of produce through simple but sophisticated French preparations.

Exclusively for Citi Cardmembers, enjoy 20% off 4 Hands Kitchen menu. In addition, Citi Prestige Cardmembers receive exclusive dining privileges.

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Cordlife group chief executive officer Michael Steven Weiss says his company is looking to invest in and/or acquire businesses with a strong earnings profile that can add to its existing multinational platform. Diagnostics, wellness and in-vitro fertilisation are all areas of focus. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

TakingStockOfStocks

Cordlife offers peace of mind

In this monthly series, **The Sunday Times** and the SGX research team interview company bosses to help investors get a better look at a firm's operations, one that goes beyond the financials



Lorna Tan

Invest Editor

Set up in May 2001 and listed on the mainboard of the Singapore Exchange in 2012, Cordlife Group is a consumer health company.

It processing and storage facilities in six key markets across Asia, namely Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as brand presence in Myanmar and Vietnam. This makes the group one of the leading providers of cord blood, cord lining and cord tissue banking services in the region.

Cordlife is one of the first private cord blood banks in Asia to release cord blood units for transplants and cellular therapy. To date, the group has released more than 500 stem cell units for use in successful transplants and therapies.

Mr Michael Steven Weiss, Cordlife's group chief executive officer, discusses the business side of the group and shares a few successful cases of cord stem cell treatment.

Q How did Cordlife begin and how has it evolved since then?

A Cordlife Group started in 2001 and is Singapore's first private cord blood bank. Over the years, we expanded into other markets in the region, beginning with Hong Kong in 2005, Indonesia and India in 2007, the Philippines in 2010, Malaysia in 2015, Myanmar in 2016, and Vietnam last year.

Today, we are one of the largest private cord blood banks in Asia and the market leader in Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia and the Philippines.

When we started, we collected and stored only umbilical cord blood, which is a rich source of haematopoietic stem cells (HSC). Currently, we also collect and store umbilical cord lining and umbilical cord tissue (also called Wharton's jelly), which contain other types of

stem cells, such as mesenchymal stem cells (MSC) and epithelial stem cells (EpSC).

Both types of stem cells are being evaluated in more than 650 clinical trials worldwide to treat conditions such as heart disease, stroke, spinal cord injury and corneal repair.

In a sense, Cordlife is really an umbilical cord stem cell bank. In today's climate of increasing investment, technological advancement and use of cellular therapies, we believe stem cell banking is more relevant, and more important, than before.

Cordlife also offers non-invasive diagnostic services for expectant mothers, newborn babies, young children and members of the family. We intend to add new services in this segment as an additional driver of growth for the company.

Cordlife is the first private cord blood bank in South-east Asia and one of only six in the world to be accredited by both AABB and FACT-NetCord, which are the principal international accreditation bodies for cord blood banks.

Q What are cord blood and cord lining/tissue and why should they be stored?

A Cord blood, cord lining and cord tissue are collected from the umbilical cord at the time of birth. Cord blood is a rich source of HSCs, which are responsible for replenishing blood and regenerating the immune system. These cells have the unique ability to differentiate into red blood cells, which transport oxygen; white blood cells, which produce antibodies and fight infections; and platelets, which assist in blood clotting.

Meanwhile, cord lining houses MSCs and EpSCs, and cord tissue, primarily MSCs. MSCs hold great potential to modulate immune response, such as to reduce graft versus host disease, as well as help in the engraftment and establishment of other cells.

MSCs can also differentiate into various cell types – such as bone, cartilage, muscle, marrow, tendon/ligament and connective tissue cells – which can be utilised for regenerative purposes. MSCs and EpSCs can also aid in wound healing.

The umbilical cord stem cells you store for your baby can be used for the treatment of more than 85 diseases – such as blood cancers, solid tumours and immunodeficiency disorders – for the child or for someone else in the family.

Stem cells from the umbilical cord are proven to be an effective substitute for those in bone marrow, which is the primary source of new blood cells in the body.

In Singapore, statistics indicate that 40 per cent to 60 per cent of patients who require stem cell transplants are unable to find a suitable

match from bone marrow donors or public cord blood banks every year.

Notably, unlike bone marrow, cord blood does not require a perfect match between the donor and the recipient. This makes it easier to find a suitable match within the family in the event that a stem cell transplant is required.

Meanwhile, clinical trials worldwide indicate that umbilical cord stem cells can be used to potentially treat a host of other conditions, including Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, spinal cord injuries, and to help in skin and tissue regeneration.

Q How does Cordlife handle the umbilical cord components?

A Once the baby is delivered, the doctor clamps the umbilical cord and drains the cord blood into a sterile blood bag. The doctor will also trim a segment of the umbilical cord lining/tissue and place it inside a sterile container. There is no discomfort or pain for either baby or mother.

These are sent to our processing and storage facility within 24 to 48 hours to be tested for infectious diseases before being processed. The stem cells are then safely stored in a temperature-controlled liquid nitrogen storage tank. Our tanks are equipped with a high-grade monitoring system to ensure that the temperature is maintained within the optimum range at all times.

Q Can you share any successful cases of cord stem cells treatment?

A Over the years, the group has released 46 cord blood units that have been successfully accepted for transplants and cellular therapies. Our proven track record for release is the ultimate validation of our capability to provide quality products and services.

In 2010, the parents of a three-month-old baby boy in Singapore discovered that his neck was too soft to support his head. The boy was later diagnosed with quadriplegic cerebral palsy and had severe hearing difficulty in both ears.

Upon learning that an infusion of umbilical cord blood could benefit children with cerebral palsy, the parents, who had stored the boy's cord blood with Cordlife, made the necessary arrangements for him to undergo a cord blood transplant. His cognitive and motor functions have since improved significantly.

More recently, a young boy, who was active and normal until he was 10, fell into a state where he constantly felt lethargic and developed a poor appetite for no apparent reason. He also experienced significant weight loss, with bouts of fever and vomiting.

In response, he endured months of various different treatments in

numerous hospitals. In 2017, doctors finally diagnosed him with chronic myeloid leukaemia. This news broke his parents' hearts, and they were determined to seek a more viable solution.

Last year, the parents managed to find a match with his youngest sister's cord blood, which they had stored with Cordlife. The ensuing transplant was a success, and we understand that the boy is in remission.

Q What other services do you provide?

A Cordlife also offers a number of diagnostic services, namely a non-invasive prenatal test for expectant mothers to screen for chromosomal abnormalities, a urine-based screening service to detect more than 100 metabolic disorders in newborns, a paediatric eye test for children aged six months to six years, and a saliva-based genetic screening to help families identify potential genetic mutations associated with hereditary conditions such as breast cancer and heart disease.

Q Is cord blood banking popular in Singapore? What about the rest of Asia?

A Interest in cord blood banking has been growing over the years as cord blood banks step up efforts to raise public awareness of their services. When people bank with us,

FORM OF INSURANCE

When people bank with us, they are in effect buying insurance and peace of mind, knowing that the cord blood they are storing can be used some day to potentially treat a life-threatening condition for their children or for themselves.

“

MR MICHAEL STEVEN WEISS, Cordlife's group chief executive officer.

they are in effect buying insurance and peace of mind, knowing that the cord blood they are storing can be used some day to potentially treat a life-threatening condition for their children or for themselves.

In Singapore, the Baby Bonus Scheme is helpful in getting parents to store their babies' cord blood as they can use the money in the Child Development Account to pay for the service. Across all the markets in Asia we operate in, Singapore is the second largest by newborn deliveries.

Demand in emerging markets such as India, Indonesia and the Philippines is growing faster than in mature markets like Singapore and Hong Kong, as their growing middle class increasingly spends more on discretionary goods and services, including specialised healthcare like stem cell banking.

Q Looking ahead, what can we expect from Cordlife?

A Our existing client base comprises more than 200,000 families across Asia. This translates into more than half a million people, or well over a million if one includes grandparents, who are frequently involved in the decision to store, and often help fund the purchase.

We want to step up engagement with the broader family, and seek multiple opportunities over time to provide goods and services over a lifetime.

With our sizeable client base, there is great potential for us to connect with our families on an ongoing basis throughout the tenure of their stem cell banking contract, which can be 18 to 21 years, or in some countries, longer.

We plan to roll out a more substantive membership/loyalty programme to offer customers certain benefits, privileges and even certain product offerings online. This will improve brand recall and better position us to pursue repeat business.

We also intend to be very active in the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) market. There are many targets around the region in our base business, but perhaps more importantly, opportunities abound in near neighbour segments that have potential synergies with our installed operations.

We will look to invest in and/or acquire businesses with a strong earnings profile that can add to our existing multinational platform. Diagnostics, wellness and in-vitro fertilisation are all areas of focus.

We believe M&A will help us further drive top- and bottom-line growth, as well as enable us to expand our portfolio of services – to offer more holistic healthcare options for everyone in the family.

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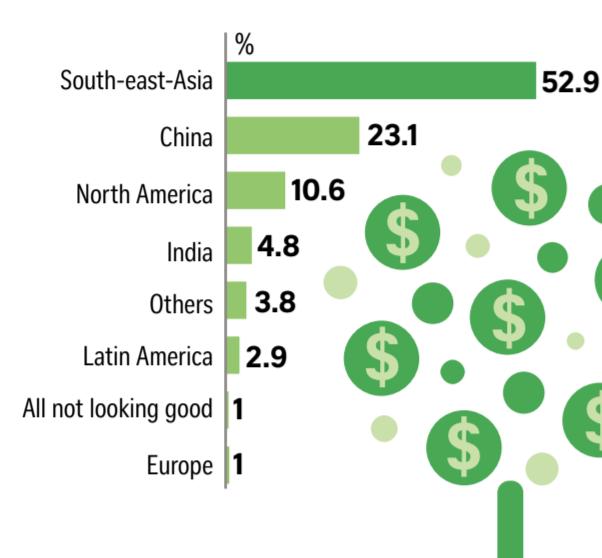
Investment outlook: How top executives think

To get a sense of business leaders' views on the investment climate this year, the BT-Citibank Outlook Survey polled top executives on their thoughts in this third annual study. Here is a summary of their responses.

INVESTMENT VIEWS

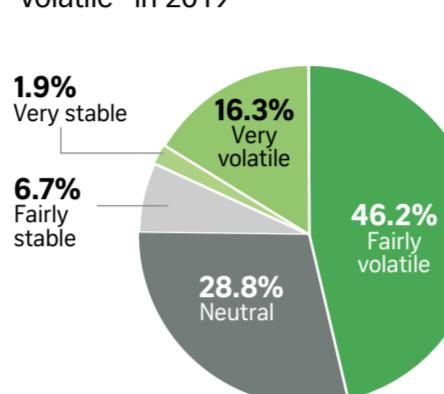
Best market for growth and investment in 2019

South-east Asia tops the list of markets for growth and investment opportunities, with China coming in a distant second



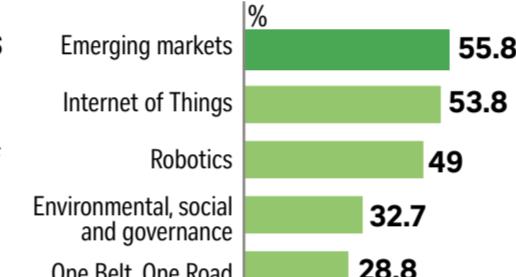
Investment environment

Majority expect the investment environment to be "fairly or very volatile" in 2019



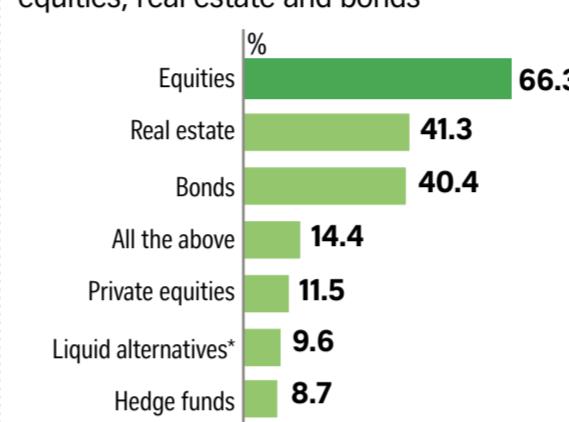
Key investment themes

Emerging markets, the Internet of Things and robotics top the list of investment themes likely to dominate in 2019



Asset classes to invest in

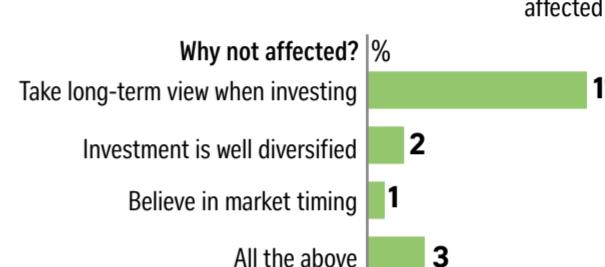
The key asset classes that respondents would be interested to invest in are equities, real estate and bonds



*Eg. Long/short strategies, commodities, fine art and so on

Impact on readiness to invest

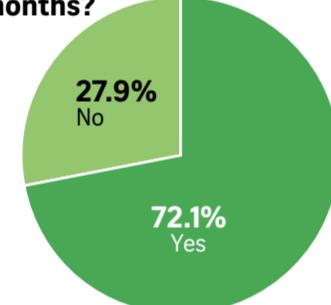
Some 15 per cent claimed their readiness to invest was not affected by factors such as the employment market, consumption trend, global political stability and the international trade situation.



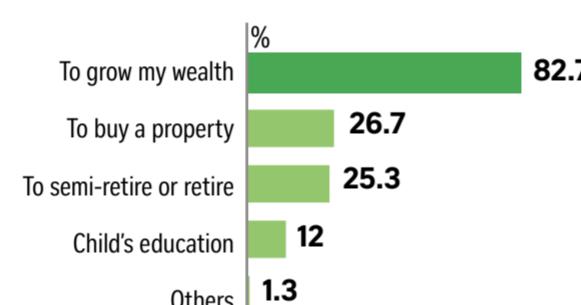
WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Most have worked out their wealth and financial goals in the past year, with the majority planning to grow their wealth. About half of them use a combination of talking to a relationship manager and online advisory tools to track their goals.

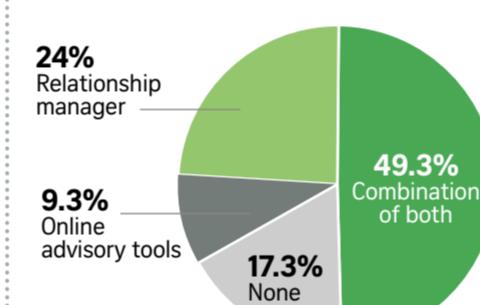
Q: Have you set wealth and financial goals in the last 12 months?



Q: What kind of goals have you set?



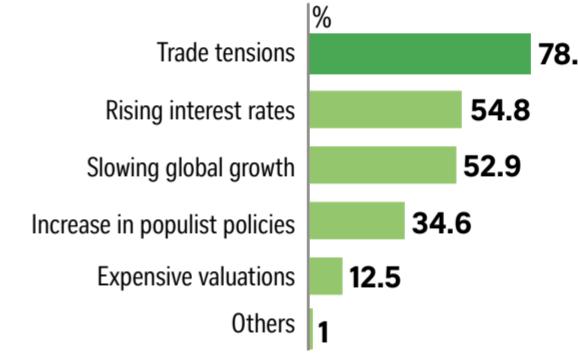
Q: How do you track your goals?



ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

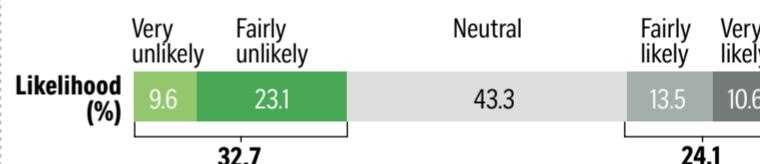
Key market concerns for 2019

Trade tension is the key market concern, followed by rising interest rates and slowing global growth.



Likelihood of recession

About three-quarters are either neutral or do not expect a recession to happen in 2019.



SUNDAY TIMES GRAPHICS

S-E Asia best market for growth, investment: Poll

BT-Citibank Outlook Survey also finds that most top executives in Singapore list US-China trade tensions as top market concern, followed by rising interest rates and slowing global growth

Lorna Tan
Invest Editor

Top executives in Singapore say South-east Asia heads the list of markets for growth and investment opportunities, with China coming in a distant second.

A poll of 104 head honchos here found that about 53 per cent of them ranked South-east Asia ahead of China (23 per cent).

The majority of respondents indicated that trade tensions between the United States and China were the top market concern and challenge, followed by rising interest rates and slowing global growth.

The findings came in the third annual survey commissioned by Citibank.

The BT-Citibank Outlook Survey polled top managers, including those holding the position of chairman, chief executive and managing director. Most were aged 40 and over. The research was conducted online by Singapore Press Holdings in November.

About 86.5 per cent of respondents placed US-China trade tensions as the top geopolitical challenge this year while about 6 per cent considered it to be Brexit.

As for global political stability and the international trade situation, most believed that things would worsen in the first six months of this year.

Ms Chan San-San, head of wealth management and segments at Citibank Singapore, said political risks will continue to linger this year as trade tensions, European political uncertainties and Brexit discussions continue, even as economic fundamentals appear strong.

About half of the survey respondents felt that the consumption trend and employment market here would remain unchanged in the first half of this year.



A fibre-optic cable factory in China's Jiangsu province. Head honchos in Singapore rank South-east Asia ahead of China for growth and investment opportunities, with US-China trade tensions their main concern. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The majority of respondents also expected the investment environment to be "fairly or very volatile" this year. About 33 per cent believed a recession was unlikely while 43.3 per cent were neutral.

The key asset classes the respondents would be interested to invest in were equities, real estate and

bonds, followed by private equities, liquid alternatives and hedge funds.

Citi's analysts forecast that the nine-year bull market is not finished and they expect single-digit percentage gains by the end of this year.

"Within equities, we prefer emerging markets, particularly

Asia, and Europe ex UK. We also believe that technology, materials and healthcare stocks provide good opportunities in 2019."

"This is also echoed by the survey respondents, with artificial intelligence, fintech and health being cited as hot business sectors for this year," said Ms Chan.

The survey indicated that the key investment themes likely to dominate this year included emerging markets (55.8 per cent), Internet of Things (53.8 per cent) and robotics (49 per cent).

An overwhelming majority of respondents said their readiness to invest would be affected by factors such as the employment market, consumption trend, global political stability and international trade situation.

Only a low 15 per cent of respondents claimed that their readiness to invest was unaffected because they took a long-term view when investing, and their investments were well diversified.

On a positive note, most have worked out their wealth and financial goals in the past year, with the majority planning to grow their wealth.

About half used a combination of talking to a relationship manager and online advisory tools to track their goals.

Financial experts continue to strongly advocate and encourage financial goal setting as one of the key pillars in a wealth planning journey.

Ms Chan said she was encouraged to see that 72 per cent of survey respondents had worked out their wealth and financial goals in the past year.

"Financial goal setting remains a key pillar in one's wealth planning journey and it is increasingly convenient to do so, thanks to digital tools at our disposal today."

"Our clients can leverage Citigold's Total Wealth Advisor to set wealth goals with their relationship managers, monitor and manage their portfolio all in one place," she added.

She advised that, in such times of volatility, a well-diversified, high-quality portfolio would be able to provide a buffer for investors.

"At Citigold, we work closely with our clients in building stronger portfolios to overcome turbulent times, by investing in more resilient assets and by employing strategies that focus on growing long-term wealth at the appropriate risk levels, using our in-house risk management tools such as the Citigold Diversification Index to help our clients," she said.

Investors are encouraged to seek advice more frequently in view of the volatility, so that they can remain nimble in this environment.

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Me&MyMoney

Treating life as a game, with money as the score

Eddie Lee sold his one-man tech firm for a few million and now runs a few businesses



Lorna Tan

Invest Editor

After working six years as a freelance Web developer upon graduation, Mr Eddie Lee decided to set up a technology development firm in 2004. He has not looked back since. Edifice, set up with no funding and a second-hand laptop, grew from a one-man outfit into an enterprise with 18 staff – and all without capital backing.

Mr Lee, 38, sold the business in 2014 for a few million dollars. As he started Edifice from home and had no staff, the business was profitable from the first month, he said.

After selling the firm, he co-founded peer-to-peer crowd-lending platform SeedIn Technology with initial capital of \$200,000, together with his partners in 2014. The platform matches small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) borrowers with individual lenders.

With offices in Singapore, Taiwan, the Philippines and Cambodia, the company has helped Asean SMEs raise more than \$160 million.

SeedIn Technology is a fintech firm and there is heavy investment in research and development and the technology side of the business.

"We were required to apply for the relevant financial licence, which led to a significant investment in time. We are looking forward to breaking even in the coming year or two. In total, we have around 40 staff across the different offices," said Mr Lee.

Recently, he started Limestone Network, a pilot project to digitalise a city using blockchain technology with his real estate partner Jeremiah Lee.

Mr Eddie Lee was often bullied when he was growing up. To defend himself, he joined the martial arts club in Yuying Secondary School as a co-curricular activity and grew to love the sport.

It started him on competitive fighting. He was selected to join the national team and represented Singapore at the 1997 SEA Games.

He said: "Martial arts was the turning point in my life as it gave me confidence and discipline. I now exercise four times a week to keep fit and I'm conscious of eating clean."

Mr Lee graduated from RMIT University in Melbourne with a Bachelor of Science, Information and Technology in 2004. His wife Kenix Loh, 37, works as a brand manager at Toyota Motors and they have a four-year-old son, Edison.

Q What's the next stage of growth for your businesses?

A With the licence to operate, we are focusing on deepening our engagement with local customers. During this period, we have also designed a few products that are due to roll out soon, to test market acceptance.

Q What's in your portfolio?

A I have listed stocks, equity investments in fintech start-ups, a payment platform Clik and a digital wallet called YouAdMe, as well as virtual currencies.

In terms of breakdown, it will be 45 per cent in listed stocks, 54 per cent in equity investments and 1 per cent in virtual currencies.

My portfolio is down about 12.5 per cent currently.

Q What are your immediate investment plans?

A It has been a bearish market so far. I'm likely to leave the current investments alone and focus on the day-to-day business, which is the main driver for all the possible investments.

However, as the market is soft and on a non-urgent basis, I'm looking at investing in a commercial office.

Q How did you get interested in investing?

A At the start of my entrepreneurship, we had to rent an office to operate. It was frustrating to find that at the end of the lease, the discussion of renewal was always to negotiate how much to adjust upwards. It eventually led to a relocation.

Over a span of seven years, we have moved four times. The years of rental amounted to about \$350,000 paid to the landlords, which I realised could be used to pay off my own mortgage (if I had owned the unit).

Eventually, I bought my own office space, renovated it and sold it after three years for a capital gain of 15 per cent. If we look at it from another angle, the company operated rent-free (\$144,000 in savings) for three years and made \$150,000 in capital gain from the sale.

Q Describe your investing strategy.

A It has always been for the long term, except for the virtual currencies portfolio. I was curious about how it works and the technology behind it.

Q What else is in your financial plan?

A I own a term insurance policy. Should anything happen to me, the outstanding house mortgage will be taken care of and my family will not have to worry.

Q How are you planning for retirement?

A I hope to accumulate \$20 million in cash and hard assets, of which \$10 million should generate a passive rental income of \$25,000 a month. Another \$8 million is for equity investing to give back to the ecosystem, be useful and maintain relevance to the business industry, while the remaining \$1 million to \$2 million is for emergency and liquidity.

I think life is fulfilling when one is passionately driven by a purpose. I



Mr Eddie Lee, with his wife Kenix Loh and four-year-old son Edison, took up martial arts to defend himself and later represented Singapore at the 1997 SEA Games. Taking up the sport was the turning point in his life, he says, as it gave him confidence and discipline. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Worst and best bets

Q What has been your biggest investing mistake?

A I have been quite blessed so far. The investments have been doing all right, except for the slightly bearish turn last year which I'd like to think is temporary and will be adjusted.

I caught the virtual currencies fever in 2017 and exited in three months with a 50 per cent gain. I returned with the profit made in the middle of last year to see it fall more than 60 per cent. The lesson I've learnt is that for speculative investments, you should set aside only what you can lose.

Q And your best investment?

A It would be the decision to start out on my own.

It was a simple and naive decision as I did so without knowing the obstacles and how lonely the journey would be. There wasn't any blueprint on how it should work... no user manual, just trial and error.

What I thought was valuable was the experience I gained along the way, which included learning how to pitch and land a sale; how to build a team that bonds; how to put on a thick skin to keep harassing the customer to pay so that I can, in return, make prompt salary disbursements to my team; and handling administrative paperwork.

I can still remember how I copied someone's invoice template to make it my own, so that I

would eventually be able to understand accounts and, subsequently, corporate finance.

After we've put all of the above together with some bittersweet years, I realise I have learnt how to scale a business, organically.

I've also enjoyed learning how to optimise my time through personal development books and attending business forums to keep current, as well as learning from some of the best in public speaking at Toastmasters.

Some would say it isn't the million-dollar destination that defines you as successful, but the process of getting there that is the most valuable.

Lorna Tan

Q Home is now...

A A three-bedroom, 1,300 sq ft condominium unit in the west that faces the sea.

At \$1.7 million, it's a little pricey for a 99-year leasehold property.

Q I drive...

A A matt gun metal Mercedes-Benz SLK.

lornatan@sph.com.sg

FinancialQuotient

What is maximum drawdown?

Dickson Tan

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
The maximum drawdown is the measure of the largest drop from

the peak of your investment value to the bottom of that investment value over the history of the portfolio, before the next peak is reached.

The measure is usually taken

within a specific timeframe such as over a one-year period. It is usually quoted as a percentage of the peak value.

Suppose you started your portfolio with \$10,000 and its value appre-

ciated to \$20,000 and subsequently dropped to \$8,000, and then increased to \$24,000, then decreased to \$6,000, and it finally ended up at \$26,000.

In this case, the maximum drawdown is $(\$24,000 - \$6,000) / \$24,000 = 75\% \text{ per cent.}$

Note that the highest peak of your portfolio is \$26,000, which is not included in the maximum drawdown calculation.

Additionally, the decline from

\$20,000 to \$8,000 has no effect on how to calculate maximum drawdown because \$20,000 was not the highest peak.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Maximum drawdown is commonly used as a gauge of the level of risk an investor is prepared to take with an investment decision as it focuses on capital preservation, which investors are usually most concerned about.

IF YOU WANT TO USE THE TERM, JUST SAY:

I consider myself to be a conservative risk taker as the maximum drawdown I am prepared to take with my investment portfolio in any given year is 10 per cent or less.

• The writer is partnership development manager at St James's Place Wealth Management, Singapore.

Life

C | **Literary England**
Ong Sor Fern goes in
search of old-fashioned
pleasures
C10&11

**All life is an
experiment. The more
experiments you make
the better.**

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

live more,
bank less 

TRENDING FOODS 2019

What's just landed? What's taking off? What to get in queue for this year? Food Correspondent **Eunice Quek** narrows it down.

C14&15

**Are you ready to
live to 100?**
Akshita Nanda asks
C3



**5 common
parenting
mistakes**
Venessa Lee
learns how
to avoid
them
C4

**Notorious
destinations**
Why Clara Lock
says they are worth
checking out anyway
C8&9

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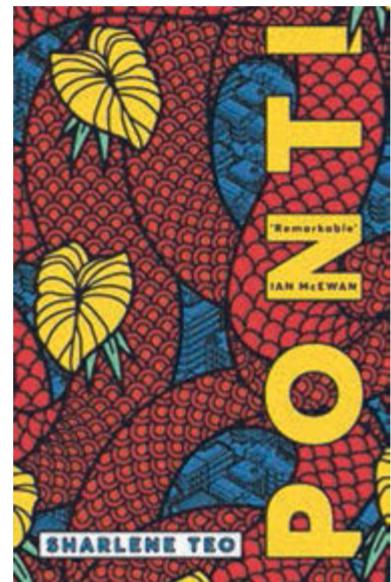
ocbc.com/mightysavers

10 books to read in 2019

If your New Year's resolution is to read more books, but you are not sure where to begin, here are 10 great books to get you started



Olivia Ho



1

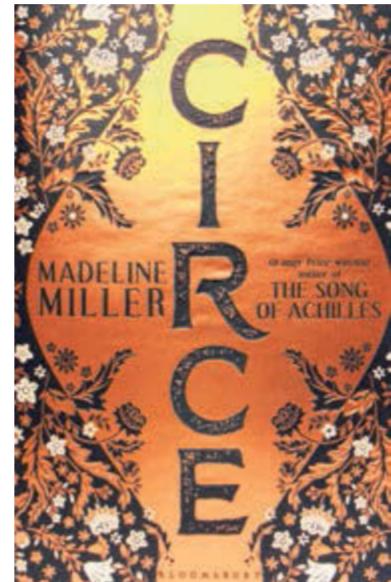
Ponti by Sharlene Teo

In hazy 2003 Singapore, 16-year-old Szu is an outcast in a convent school as her unbearably beautiful and distant mother Amisa, once briefly famous for starring in a cult horror film series about a pon-tanak, wastes away.

This dreamy, disquieting debut looks at female friendship and the link between womanhood and monstrosity.

Languid and mesmerising, the book makes teenage girlhood in Singapore into something rich and strange, yet at the same time achingly familiar.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/opPL



2

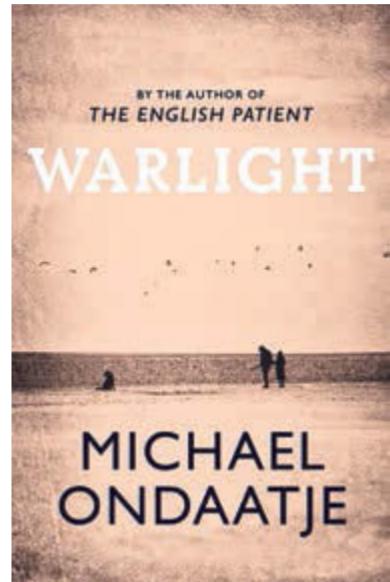
Circe by Madeline Miller

This brilliant retelling of Greek myth focuses on Circe, the first witch in Western literature, most famous for turning men into pigs.

A minor character exiled to an island in Homer's epic *Odyssey*, she unfolds here from colourless daughter to full-blown "nasty woman".

This spellbinding tale treats women's work with the scale of epic heroism.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/0nNn



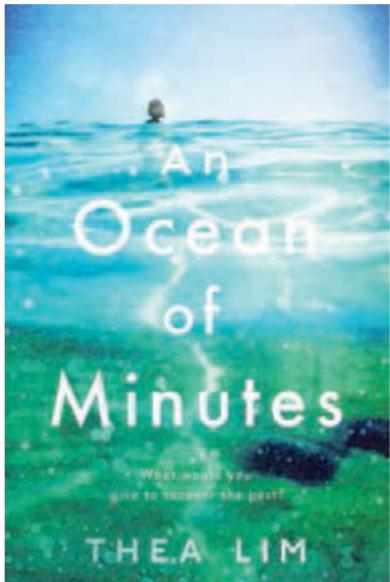
3

Warlight by Michael Ondaatje

In this elegant, shadowy novel, 14-year-old Nathaniel and his older sister are left behind by their parents in post-World War II London, in the care of a group of mysterious maybe-criminals. Years later, an adult Nathaniel tries to piece together his mother's covert career as a war spy and reconcile himself with her sins.

Ondaatje, whose 1992 novel *The English Patient* was picked by the public last year as the top Man Booker Prize winner of the last 50 years, sheds light with breathtaking intricacy on the shifting geography of memory.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/0gFV



4

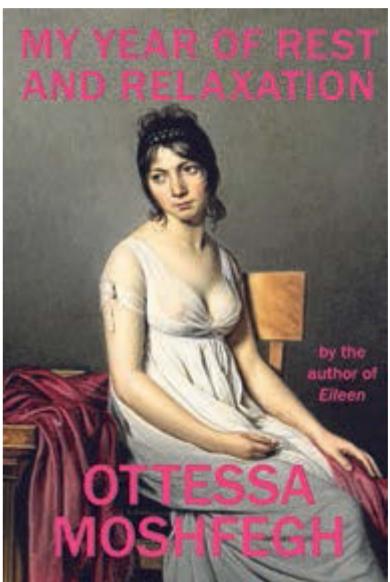
An Ocean Of Minutes

by Thea Lim

This remarkable debut, which was shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize, a prestigious Canadian literary award, delves into immigration and the ravages of time, but without losing sight of the love story at its bittersweet heart.

A young woman in Texas volunteers to time-travel 12 years into the future to save her boyfriend from a viral pandemic, but cannot find him when she arrives. Lim creates a frighteningly plausible dystopia – because somewhere in the real world, it is happening to someone else.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/0mR



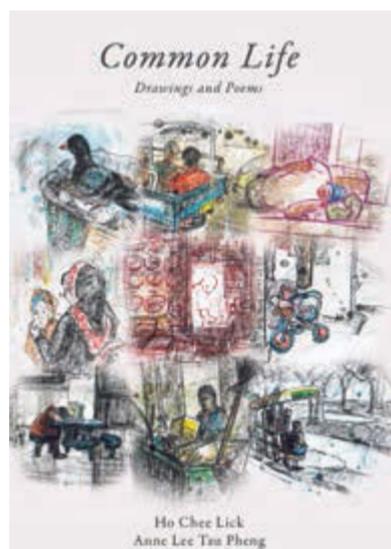
5

My Year Of Rest And Relaxation by Ottessa Moshfegh

In this caustic, blackly comic novel, a privileged young woman retreats into a drug-induced haze in her Manhattan apartment, numbing her senses with television, anti-depressants and blackout-inducing pills even as the world around her changes, culminating in the Sept 11 attacks.

Whether you recoil from Moshfegh's fascination with the scatological and profane or find it oddly cathartic, the brilliance of her prose – lithe, searing, crackling with wit – can hardly be denied.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/0nNn



6

Common Life by Ho Chee Lick and Anne Lee Tzu Pheng

Lee, one of Singapore's most esteemed poets, offers an easy entry point to verse in this keenly sensitive collection, which looks at the everyday – junk furniture, void decks, hawker centres – and invests it with grace.

The poems, inspired by Ho's crayon drawings, are deceptively simple; in fact, they question the point of poetry and how it should be shared.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/0mpv



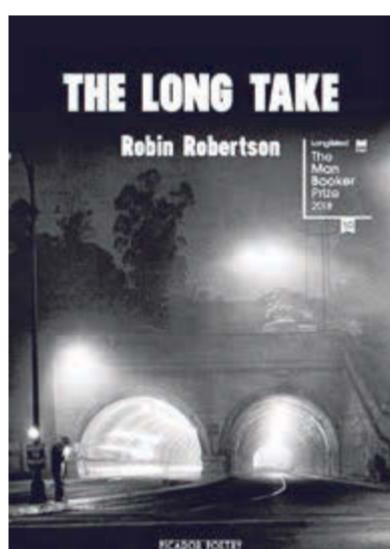
7

Milkman by Anna Burns

Burns' novel, which won last year's Man Booker Prize, is, in a way, like the Disney movie *Beauty And The Beast* – both have a heroine who likes to read while walking and is therefore a social outcast – but instead of a fairy-tale ending, creepy men just follow the protagonist around endlessly.

The experimental novel depicts an unnamed 18-year-old's experiences during the Irish Troubles, as she is sexually harassed by a senior paramilitary figure. It is a challenging yet compelling narrative that resonates in the #MeToo era.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/0eB6



8

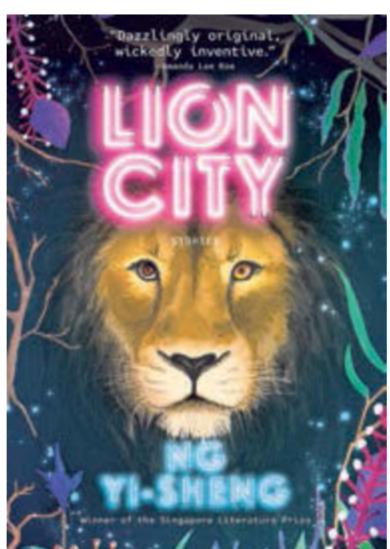
The Long Take by Robin Robertson

A dazzling, desolate neo-noir odyssey, this was the first novel in verse to be shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

Its narrator Walker, a World War II veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder, wanders the mean streets of America's changing, failing cities.

Through Robertson's lines, the post-war city comes alive: breathing, beautiful, bitterly ruined.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/0eBB



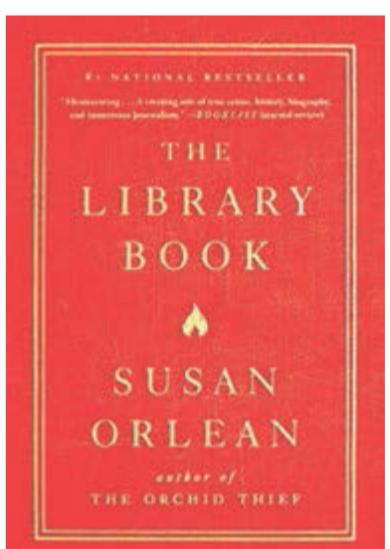
9

Lion City by Ng Yi-Sheng

The many worlds of Ng's speculative short stories delight and discomfit in equal measure, from a Changi Airport terminal for gods to an alternate history in which boy genius Hang Nadim finds a world-dominating empire.

If you enjoyed the branching paths of Black Mirror's movie *Bandersnatch* on Netflix, check out Ng's story *Garden*, which turns Singapore's timeline – real and fictional – into choose-your-own-adventure game.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/0XAF



10

The Library Book by Susan Orlean

Journalist Orlean turns an investigation of the devastating 1986 Los Angeles Public Library fire into an exceptional love letter to libraries, as she delves into the colourful history of the library, tracks down the family of the alleged arsonist, and even tries setting a book on fire herself.

Her contemplative, lyrical bent makes the prose a pleasure to read. Even in the digital age, she lovingly demonstrates the importance of libraries as a communal space and the enduring power of the book.

• Check out a full review at str.sg/02DH

oliviaho@sph.com.sg

THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018
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Nizar Mohamed Shariff and Free Food For All
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Read about the other finalists at str.sg/soty2018 and tell us who should be the Singaporean of the Year 2018 by Jan 15, 6pm

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Ready to live till 100?

People are living longer, and we should examine our own attitudes towards the later decades of life



Akshita Nanda

The time between two New Year celebrations is a good time to think about the future. So, hello. This is the beginning of the rest of your life.

How long do you think it will be? Given high life expectancy in Singapore, odds are that someone reading this column today will be around to welcome January 2099.

Are you ready to live to be 100 years old?

I'm not sure that I am. Most in Singapore are not, judging by the responses from those asked the same question in a recent survey commissioned by Prudential Singapore.

According to the survey's results, released last September, out of 1,200 Singaporeans aged 25 and older, nearly 700 did not want to hit the century mark. Most said they were not healthy or wealthy enough to enjoy later decades of life.

The outliers must have been like

the man in his early 80s whom I encountered a few weeks ago in the MRT. He needed directions to the Singapore Press Holdings News Centre because he had signed up for The Straits Times English Masterclass. On our walk over, he told me of his determination to learn something new every year.

He planned to put together a group of active agers with similar interests, who would meet regularly for fitness sessions and conversation.

My parents, who are in their 60s, were too young for his group, but he said he would consider making an exception as long as they had a positive attitude towards ageing and learning new things.

"I'm going to live to be 100 and be healthy and happy," he said. "No dementia or depression."

Our conversation was too short for me to ask whether he was quoting the recommendations for living with longevity that were made by the Prudential survey, as well as London Business School professors Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott in their book, *The 100-Year Life: Living and Working In An Age of Longevity* (2016).

The man I met was putting into practice many of these recommendations to individuals.

He exercised every morning and watched his diet – preserving health, check.

He looked for opportunities to make new friends – expand social network offline, check.

He was learning something new – seek challenges and think beyond the traditional study-work-retire life path, check.

He spoke often to his two daughters – close personal relationships, check.

He told me that the English masterclass was to help him teach foreign workers English – community service and network-building, check.

He also told me that he worked in a security firm in order to stay financially independent – manage financial assets, check, and double-take to consider the implications of his situation.

Are we ready to live to 100? Health and a flexible, inquiring mind are matters for individuals to work on and many are well aware of what they need to do to stay healthy well into later life.

Several of my peers in their 40s are signing up for fun runs or educational courses to hone body and mind, despite the demands of full-time work and being caregivers to parents as well as school-going children.

I have met people who took charge of their physical and mental health in their 50s, 60s and even 70s, and now look, feel and are healthier than expected at their age. Some started an exercise regimen, others combined exercise with a hobby such as playing music or learning to dance.

Some start new ventures. Actress Catherine Sng started Glowers Drama Group for people aged 50 and older when she was 58 and architect Liu Thai Ker started a new firm in 2017, when he was 79.

Professor Gratton said in a 2016 interview with McKinsey & Company publications: "We will see – and I can't wait to see it, we're already seeing it – lots and lots of experimentation as people, individually, in their communities, and in their families, begin to build lives that are sustainable for the long term."

An individual can do a lot to maintain her physical and mental health and flexibility over the years. Wealth, however...

Not everyone has the resources to turn entrepreneur in later life. Can the average wage-earner save enough for the post-retirement decades? Maybe, but costs of living tend to rise over the years and even the thriftiest 80-year-old might face an unforeseen emergency that cuts into his or her savings.

Paid work will be important to the longer-lived late into their lives. Work might also provide the social networks, engagement and meaningful goals that are necessary for humans to enjoy their longevity.

The local survey says Singaporeans are willing to stay longer in the workforce,



ST ILLUSTRATION: CEL GULAPA

reinventing themselves as necessary.

But are employers ready for employees who are 70, let alone 100 years old? Mostly not, it seems (though Prudential scrapped its retirement age late last year).

Government policies here state that workers cannot be forced to retire before the age of 62 and eligible employees can be rehired up to the age of 67, but has that led to real change in the workplace environment and hiring attitude?

The man I met in the MRT was working in a security firm, having had to retire from a corporate position at the age of 62. I have heard this story before and, in two decades from now, it may well be my story.

Older workers are often the first

to be laid off during cost-cutting exercises. Workers rehired after the age of 62 may be taken on without the medical and other benefits they enjoyed when younger.

We exist in a period of cultural lag and many institutions have not yet adapted to the fact that people are and will be living longer than ever before. It is estimated that by 2030, almost one million in Singapore will be over the age of 65. We need to start adjusting our attitudes to older workers and adapting the workplace environment to be more inclusive. A good way would be to tap the lived expertise of workers over the age of 50, asking them to design workstations and work interfaces, as well as suggest how to redesign workplace roles.

Beyond that, we need to re-examine our own attitudes towards the later decades of life.

Are we ready for ourselves, our parents and neighbours to turn 100? Not everyone will be healthy, cheerful and able to live independently. We will need to be more aware of one another as a community and step up to support each other.

We will need to be kinder to one another and more aware of when someone needs help, say, finding the way somewhere. Hello. Welcome to the rest of your life, and mine – our future. It will likely be a long one together. Let's make it a good one for each other.

akshitn@sph.com.sg

The new 50s – being mentor and novice at the same time

Marci Alboher

After Mr Chip Conley sold Joie de Vivre, the boutique hotel company he created and ran for about 24 years, his life took an unexpected turn.

At 52, he was sought out by Mr Brian Chesky, the then-31-year-old chief executive of Airbnb, for advice on how to turn the fledgling home-sharing start-up into a major player in the hospitality field.

For the next four years, Mr Conley worked at Airbnb, toggling between being a mentor and an intern in a sometimes baffling new role – a "modern elder", as he put it.

As a veteran hospitality executive, he was used to being the "stage on the stage".

But as a newbie in the tech sector, he was often the oldest person in the room, learning from colleagues who were young enough to be his children.

In a new book, *Wisdom At Work*, he writes that everyone working past middle age today needs to become a modern elder, simultaneously sharing wisdom while embracing fresh ideas and ways of thinking.

I think he is on to something. It used to be, 50 was a time to begin thinking about retirement. But today, many people in their 50s – myself included – plan to work two or three more decades.

To become modern elders, we have to find new ways to stay relevant and keep our minds open, skills fresh and humility intact.

Some did their homework and went back to school for jobs where there are known shortages – like nursing or teaching in fields such as science and technology. Some found their way through volunteering or attending specialised fellowships or boot camps. Others teamed up with younger partners to lead new ventures. Most, it seems, did a combination of all these things.

Ms Sharon Lewis, an independent consultant on consumer habits, was doing scouting work for the cultural forecasting firm sparks & honey when she heard about the company's new cultural apprentice programme.

The apprenticeship was designed to bring together millennials and people with 30 years of professional experience to work on, among other things, a report on the future of work.

Ms Lewis decided to sign up for the 16-week programme, which offered only a modest stipend, as a 60th-birthday present to herself. "The idea of working around so many younger people was exciting and invigorating," she said. "I feel wiser, more well-rounded and updated, and I'm almost in withdrawal now."

She especially appreciated the mutual mentoring. "We're not

competing with one another because we're at different life stages."

Despite the promising stories, I hear a lot from people over 50, even over 45, who are doing the right things but still not finding successful midlife transitions. Ageism is rampant – and internalised, with midlifers questioning our own ability to succeed in a world where youth is prized.

And while there are many new offerings to help people make late-career transitions, moving into an encore career still requires an immense amount of creativity and persistence.

I have learnt two things from my interviews about making these transitions easier.

First, and most obviously, it helps to have a financial safety net. So volunteering or refreshing skills while still employed, collecting severance or a pension, or having a partner who provides an income or health insurance can make a big difference. It is far more daunting without that kind of cushion.

Second, the attitudes of younger colleagues are just as important as our own when we think about finding new roles in a rapidly transforming workplace.

NYTIMES

• The writer is the vice-president for strategic communications at Encore.org.

PUBLIC SEMINAR

Mental Health in the City

DATE: SUNDAY, 20 JAN 2019

TIME: 2.00PM - 4.00PM

VENUE: NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

1 St Andrew's Rd, Singapore 178957

Living, Working and Ageing in Singapore

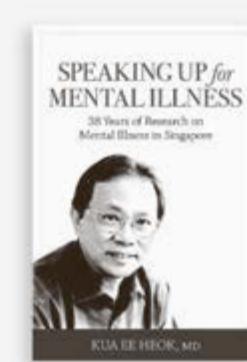
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Professor Norman Sartorius
Former Director of Mental Health, World Health Organisation and President, World Psychiatric Association

Helping Children Cope and Enjoy School
Dr Celine Wong
Consultant Child Psychiatrist, NUH

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Dr Tian Cheong Sing
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Traditional disciplinary methods such as time-out do not always work for children, says American parenting educator Katherine Reynolds Lewis. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

When kids run riot

Parenting expert Katherine Reynolds Lewis says people in nuclear families today are raising their children in a climate of fear. She shares five common mistakes that parents make



Venessa Lee

Demanding our children's obedience is counter-productive, says parenting expert Katherine Reynolds Lewis.

It is a claim that may raise eyebrows but Lewis, an American author, journalist and certified parenting educator, knows a thing or two about how to motivate children to behave well.

Last year, the 45-year-old published her first book, *The Good News About Bad Behavior: Why Kids Are Less Disciplined Than Ever? And What to Do About It* (Public Affairs).

In 2015, she wrote an article about school discipline, *What If Everything You Knew About Disciplining Kids Was Wrong?*, for American news magazine *Mother Jones*, which went viral.

Her mother, a retired university administrator, is a Singaporean-Chinese who moved to the United States for graduate school, where she met and married Lewis' dad, now a retired university professor.

Her parents, both 74, live with Lewis and her family in the suburbs of Washington DC.

Lewis was in town recently to visit her relatives. She is married to a 59-year-old cardiologist and they have three children, aged 25, 14 and 12.

She shares with The Sunday Times the five most common mistakes that parents make.

venessal@sph.com.sg

When we see them misbehaving, it's really an opportunity for us to help lead them to the path that will be successful for them. Our goal is not for them to obey us, but for them to have a deep sense of right or wrong, which is more valuable than just obeying what we say.

PARENT EXPERT KATHERINE REYNOLDS LEWIS

FIVE MISTAKES PARENTS MAKE

1

Trying to control our children

"It's a mistake to want your child to behave a certain way or make him have a certain outcome. It's really about our kids discovering themselves. We are their coach and guide in that process."

Instead of thinking that we're in control and wanting to control them, our goal should be to influence them. We need them to develop self-control.

Every educator I interviewed for my book – all of whom had been teaching for more than 10 years – said that children enter kindergarten with less behavioural control.

They can't sit still. They can't keep their hands to themselves. They can't resolve a dispute at the playground without running to a teacher.

Our kids need to learn to manage themselves. For instance, it's important to have healthy limits. One 12-year-old I know uses only Snapchat because Instagram makes her too anxious. Snapchat footage goes away after 24 hours so she doesn't obsess about that photo of all the other kids at a party. It works for her.

She's being coached by her mum to pay attention to what is healthy for her. That's our ultimate goal for our kids – to help them understand themselves."

2

Feeling like failures when kids make errors

"When we see our kids doing something they're not supposed to, our reaction is that we've failed. We have failed to cultivate in them the obedience to do the right thing at all times."

Actually, kids are going to mess up.

So when we see them misbehaving, it's really an opportunity for us to help lead them to the path that will be successful for them. Our goal is not for them to obey us, but for them to have a deep sense of right or wrong, which is more valuable than just obeying what we say.

Our world has changed so much from maybe, 40 years ago, when it was important to take orders for safety reasons, for example, in factories and assembly lines.

Now, entrepreneurship, innovation and collaboration are valued more. Obedience is no longer such a primary value.

If we, as parents, are always trying to give our children more independence, more autonomy, more responsibility, then they develop these skills that are so important in school and, later, in their career.

We make childhood about achievement, but it should be about character-building and learning social and life skills to manage their emotions and behaviour. We don't want our children to be little performers.

Doing household chores is an important way for kids to feel capable. So many things we ask them to do are difficult long-term goals involving academic achievement, for example.

But if we teach them to cook an egg and serve it for breakfast or sweep a room and make it clean, they have an immediate sense of accomplishment."

3

Not letting children fail

"We jump in to stop our children from failing. It can be when they're learning to walk and we don't want them to fall."

The thinking is that the stakes are so high: 'I cannot let my 12-year-old slack off or she won't do well in her exams. She won't get into a good secondary school.'

But the stakes are higher a few years later, when our children are studying for university. So we need to let them fail sooner and earlier.

Otherwise, we've pushed them all the way to university and suddenly, they don't know where they want to go. They don't have their own drive or interests.

We don't want a 20- or 22-year-old who's lost. We want them from the age of five or six to be developing their own motivation, and study and work habits.

Most of that comes from life experience, from messing up, from deciding, 'I guess I'd better straighten myself up'."

4

We are afraid of our kids' displeasure

"We try to keep our kids happy all the time and we're so worried about them being upset or having conflict. This is partly because we are raising kids within a culture of fear. We will be blamed for anything that goes wrong with the child."

But it is actually important for kids to learn that they can have strong emotions and learn to manage them, and that neither they nor their parents will fall apart because of these feelings.

Otherwise, you're sending your kids the message that such feelings should be shoved back down. That's what leads to mental-health challenges such as depression."

5

We try to parent on our own

"Parents try to do it alone, but we need to find our communities of support, other like-minded parents. Find your own groups where your kids can play with others so you can get a break or where you can get advice in a non-judgmental way."

We have all this guilt, which can be damaging to us and our kids because even when we're with them, we feel like it's not enough. Instead of being present for five minutes, reconnecting with your child after work and enjoying it, you're thinking, 'I should have picked him up 45 minutes earlier.'

My grandmother didn't spend all her time with her kids. She was a college professor and my grandparents went out for cocktails all the time.

It's a modern idea of the nuclear family, where we're so devoted to our children and we have this intensive parenting culture. We have this ideal parent that we measure ourselves against – and it's really a myth."

BEAUTY BOOSTERS
BROUGHT TO YOU BY
THE AESTHETICS MEDICAL CLINIC

PHOTO: THE AESTHETICS MEDICAL CLINIC

Tackling dark spots and freckles

Pigmentation is a common problem for Asians but The Aesthetics Medical Clinic can help

Pigmentation and skin discolouration are often the result of sun damage, age and even skin hereditary traits. An uneven skin tone could also be caused by hormonal changes, especially in middle-aged women.

Post-inflammatory hyper pigmentation — dark scars due to previous skin injuries such as cuts, bruises and acne — is another common condition.

Many cosmetic and medical grade skin-lightening creams are available, but they often take three to six months to show results. Traditional laser treatments may be effective but they usually target only one skin problem at a time.

Dr Francis Tjeng, a resident aesthetic physician at The Aesthetics Medical Clinic (TAMC), has a specially formulated hybrid laser treatment that uses two technologies (ClarityX Laser and Fractional CO2 Laser).

It aims to achieve skin revitalisation by not only improving skin texture, but also reducing the appearance of large pores, dull complexion and pigmentation.

He says: "Directing short pulsating beams of light at irregular skin conditions stimulates new skin growth and helps to reduce the amount of melanin compounds in one's skin."

"Melanin in the skin is often in large particles. The ClarityX Laser helps to break down the melanin into smaller particles for your skin cells to destroy."

Dr Tjeng has a Diploma of Aesthetic Medicine from the United States, a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from Australia, as well as a Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine from Singapore.

Fractionating the beams has helped to reduce the side effects of traditional methods of laser resurfacing.

With 70 micron beams, downtime can be reduced to one day, or even an hour or two.

There will be no visible tan lines or "stamp" marks. Post-laser markings are only visible at a microscopic level. You can go back to work the next day with minimal make-up and coverage, he adds.

Call TAMC on 6316-5282 or e-mail info@tamc.com.sg for more information.

You can also call, text or WhatsApp 9181-7303, or drop by the clinic at Bukit Batok Civil Service Club, Block D #05-02, 91 Bukit Batok West Avenue 2, Singapore 659206.

The Hybrid Perfecting Laser treatment is available at \$88 net. Terms and conditions apply.

Successful ageing



An improved vision helps Mr Quek enjoy his calligraphy hobby better. PHOTO: TED CHEN

Better eye for life

Project Silver Screen helps seniors improve their vision, hearing and oral health

Jac Woo

Being in the frontline of saving lives opened Mr Quek Kwang Liang's eyes to the medical world.

The 82-year-old retired businessman was a volunteer in his youth for St John Ambulance — a service he was committed to for almost 60 years.

He recalls: "In the 1950s, we were attached to the ambulance crew every weekend. We were also sent to hospitals to watch doctors at work."

"Some doctors would explain medical procedures to us, and as I was always eager to learn. I gained a lot of knowledge and could render first aid."

After paying it forward for so long, it was Mr Quek's time to be on the receiving end. Thanks to a timely health screening two years ago, he is a survivor of prostate cancer, and is now a passionate advocate of going for check-ups.

"Many elderly people are afraid to see a doctor because they don't want to know they have health problems. But it is good if you discover a health problem after screening because you become aware of it and can get it treated earlier," he says. "That's why I like to go for

It is good if you discover a health problem after screening because you become aware of it and can get it treated earlier.

“

MR QUEK KWANG LIANG, 82

medical check-ups."

While Mr Quek's action-packed days in the ambulance crew may be over, he still keeps busy.

Weekends are spent with his three children and eight grandchildren who join him and his 74-year-old wife for meals. Weekdays are for learning new skills and socialising. His daily activities include going for walks, meeting friends and practising Chinese calligraphy.

He has been attending weekly calligraphy classes at a Residents' Committee centre for the past two years.

SCREENING FOR SENIORS

Last year, Mr Quek jumped at the opportunity to get himself checked at a functional screening programme for seniors at Hougang 1 mall.

Under the Project Silver Screen (PSS) programme, senior citizens can get their vision, hearing and oral health checked at subsidised rates.

As a follow-up to his functional screening results, Mr Quek underwent eye checks at a mobile clinic bus. The staff recommended new reading glasses, which he purchased with a \$200 subsidy he received from PSS.

He says: "Although I could normally read without glasses, I discovered that my vision was unbalanced; one eye was weaker than the other. I had to wear glasses to prevent my weaker eye from becoming lazy."

He is glad that eye checks can help to detect hidden problems like this, which many elderly people may not be aware of.

Doing more calligraphy writing is one of the joys of an improved vision for Mr Quek. While he may not yet be up to writing Chinese New Year couplets as gifts for friends, he can nevertheless better savour the pieces he has made.

"After I write, I keep them at home — for my eyes only," he says with a laugh.

This series is an initiative under the Action Plan for Successful Ageing.

GET SCREENED EARLY

WHAT:

- Project Silver Screen (PSS) offers functional screening for hearing, eyesight and oral health at subsidised rates to Singapore citizens aged 60 and above.
- It is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Temasek Foundation Cares and the business community.

HOW MUCH:

- Free for Pioneer Generation card holders, \$2 for Community Health Assist Scheme card holders, \$5 for all other Singapore citizens.
- If you require follow-up treatment, you will be referred to the relevant healthcare services.
- Need-based subsidies are available for all treatments. You may also receive PSS vouchers of between \$15 and \$200 if you require aids such as spectacles, hearing aids and dentures.

WHERE AND WHEN:

- For more information and functional screening schedules, visit www.projectsilverscreen.sg or call the Singapore Silver Line on 1800-650-6060 (Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 8.30pm, and Saturday: 8.30am to 4pm, excluding public holidays).

Project Silver Screen

See, Hear & Eat Better

Functional screening for Singaporeans aged 60 and above

3-In-1
One-stop screening to check your eyes, ears and mouth

Accessible
Nationwide screening in the community

Affordable
Low fee of \$5 or less for eligible Singaporeans

For more information, call the Singapore Silver Line at 1800 650 6060 or visit www.projectsilverscreen.sg

Programme Partners:

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- Temasek Foundation Cares

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- PSA The World's Port of Call
- SP group
- ST Engineering

Platinum Sponsor:

- CapitaLand HOPE FOUNDATION

Subscriber benefits on the SPH Rewards app



Photo: Mary Chia



Photo: Ban Heng

REUNION UNDER THE STARS WITH BAN HENG GROUP OF RESTAURANTS

Chinese New Year is beckoning and it is time to get down to planning for reunion celebrations to usher in the Year of the Pig. This year, save yourself (or the matriarchs of the family) the trouble of cooking up a feast and the massive post-celebration clean up. Instead, head down to any Ban Heng Group's restaurants to enjoy a sumptuous reunion dinner at an affordable price.

The 50-year restaurant chain, which specialises in traditional Teochew and Cantonese cuisine, has launched its Chinese New Year packages; nine course set menus for a serving size for 10 people, with prices starting from \$568++. This year, Ban Heng Group of Restaurants has also launched a new reunion dinner menu with a star item - a whole suckling pig. The nine-course suckling pig menu is good for a serving size of 10 people and priced at only \$698++.

To up the celebratory mood, Ban Heng will be opening up their outdoor garden seating area at

SPRING CLEAN TO GREAT SKIN & BODY!

Mary Chia Beauty & Slimming Specialist is a homegrown beauty & wellness brand, with over 36 years of specialized expertise in the field of weight management and skincare. Mary Chia remains to be the preferred choice for many female customers looking for a trusted name in helping them achieve their desired physique and complexion.

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As Chinese New Year is drawing near, it is time to get rid of all the physical dirt and grime in your abode. The Chinese prepares for the Spring Festival by 'sweeping away the back luck' of the previous year prepares it to be filled with auspicious vibes in the coming new year.

Similarly, it is important to prep the face and detox the body, and usher in the new year filled with fortune and all things good! Usher in the new year with a fresh face and energised body at an awesome price of \$28 nett per treatment! Usually priced at \$192.60, these are now available to all readers who are first time customers aged 23 years and above. Valid for Singaporeans, PR, EP and SPH holders only. Valid till 31 March 2019.

For a good facial regime to kick start the year, choose the Spring Bling Face Spa (60 minutes) and immerse yourself in absolute bliss with this power facial which removes dead skin cells and unclog pores with a unique microdermabrasion wand using diamond chip. Treatment is followed by a luxurious application of ampoule, cream and soft masque to boost the hydration level and glow that radiates from within.

For overall wellness and detox, the Wellness Booster Body Treatment (60 minutes) uses a special massage applicator for specific level of pressure and rhythmic circular movements to stimulate the lymph to encourage drainage of fluid and waste. Treatment is followed by a nourishing milk polish and cocoon wrap to increase overall metabolic rate.

SMS/ WhatsApp "SPH19_Name" to 9781 7751 or call your preferred Mary Chia or Urban Homme outlet listed below and quote "SPH19" upon making your reservation. Please present your NRIC/FIN on day of appointment for verification.

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Include your Name, Mobile Number and Address in the email. Terms and conditions apply.

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Include your Name, Mobile Number and Address in the email. Terms and conditions apply.

come in handy during the festive period when families and friends gather for reunion feasts so don't miss out on this deal!

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3. Save the deal to your e-wallet
4. Press the "Go to Website" button on the "Details" page and answer the below question: 'Which character is featured for Darlie's latest promotional merchandise giveaway?'

Include your Name, Mobile Number and Address in the email. Terms and conditions apply.



Photo: Darlie Double Action Toothpaste

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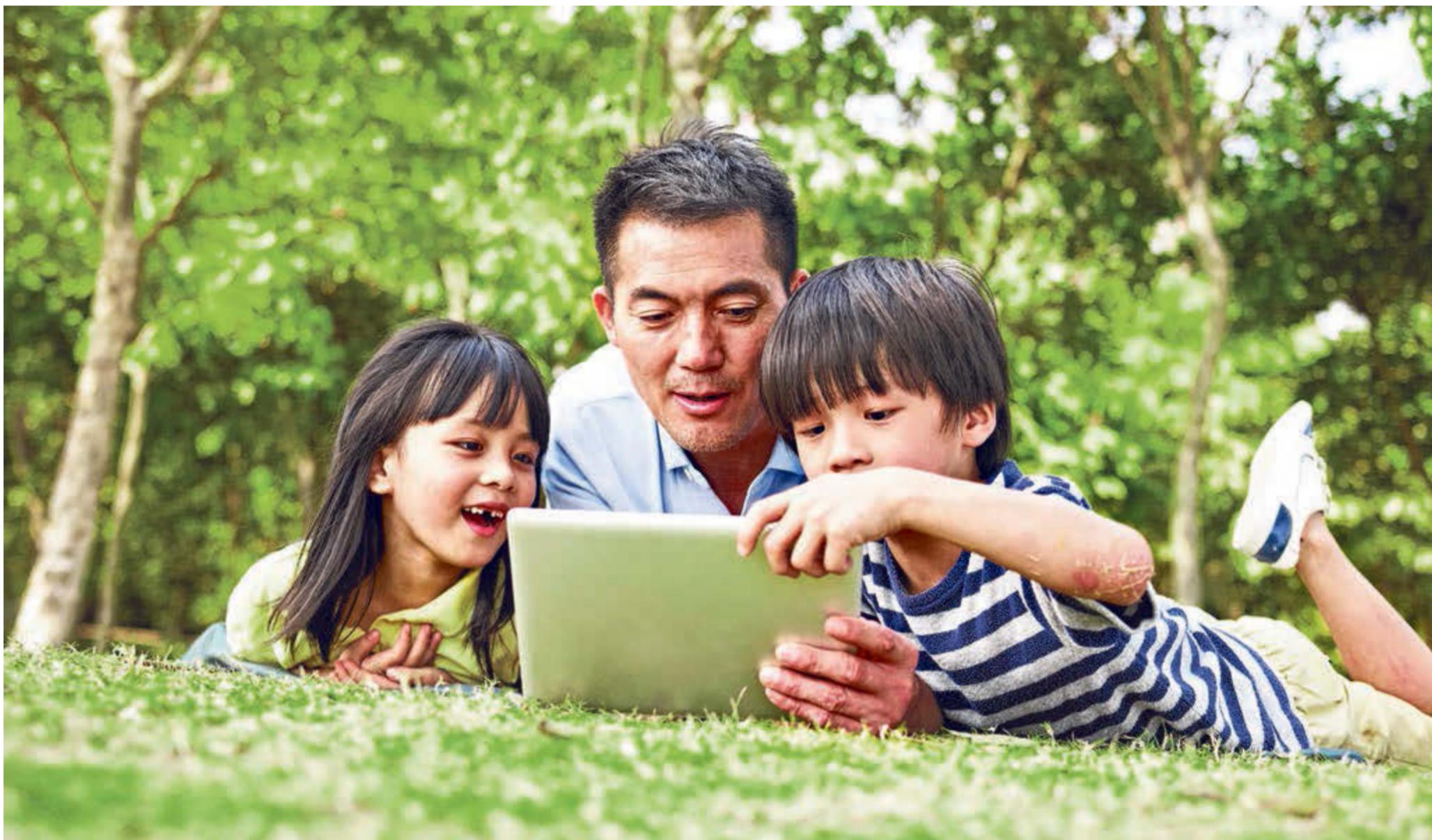


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There's no way you can say 'no' to screens. It's not possible. They'll be at a huge disadvantage in their lives if they have no experience with this type of technology.

“

MR MIKE POPEK, who worked at Google for nearly 14 years in management, on why he allows his three children - aged nine, seven and three - to have some screen time

It is often more effective to put rules in place rather than to cut back on screen time once a child has developed screen habits.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

A balance of screen and offline time

While letting their kids use digital devices, Silicon Valley executives also want them to have healthy experiences in real life

Ana Homayoun

Is it true that Silicon Valley tech executives don't let their kids use screens?"

I was on the east coast of the United States, speaking with parents and, once again, was asked the question I cannot seem to escape.

I have observed with curiosity the ongoing buzz about how Silicon Valley parents - particularly those who are technology executives and investors - keep their children off screens. These stories tend to create low-grade anxiety as well as parent-shaming aimed at those who let their kids use screens.

Over the past 15 years, I have worked as an educational consultant focused on executive-functioning issues with tweens and teens in an office about 8km from Google, Facebook and Apple's main campuses.

It is no secret that social media and technology use have become a hot topic, especially because there has been little research into the relationship between teens' technology and social media use and long-term brain development and mental wellness.

The National Institutes of Health in the United States recently launched the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development study, which will track more than 11,000 teens to investigate factors that influence young people, including the impact of screen use on brain development.

Research has linked digital media use to poorer sleep quality and duration, which, as sleep researcher Matthew Walker notes in his book Why We Sleep, can easily affect focus, mood and mental well-being.

After spending the past year traveling to more than 35 cities in the US consulting with schools on social media, technology and student wellness issues, as well as visiting schools in Silicon Valley, I have found it is a fallacy that most parents working in technology want their kids to live completely screen-free lives.

It may be easier to keep younger children from using screens, but the Silicon Valley parents I interviewed agreed that it is not realistic once children are of schoolgoing age. Instead, they are focused on finding ways to make sure their kids have healthy experiences online and in real life.

Mr Loren Cheng, director of product management for Facebook Messenger Kids, has three children - a fifth-grader, a second-grader and a preschooler. He lets them use technology to promote creation, collaboration or communication. His second-grader loves Minecraft

and recently used online video tutorials to build an elaborate castle with underground traps. His fifth-grader messages him in the afternoon when he is still at work; conversations he is not sure they would have otherwise.

These activities point to an often overlooked distinction in how and when technology is used.

For instance, a child passively staring at a screen is different from one who is actively communicating with a grandparent via FaceTime or using online tools for creative projects.

For younger kids, strict guidelines can be critical. But as children get older, it is important for parents to fix times for them to be offline.

Monitoring apps such as Bark or OurPact work best in concert with conversations around use, not in lieu of them.

Of course, what works for one family might not work for another. But it is often more effective to put rules in place rather than to cut back on screen time once a child has developed screen habits.

Another good option is to provide steps for incremental usage, say, starting with a flip-phone and then moving to a smartphone, or creating an environment in which access to a smartphone or screen is the exception rather than the default.

Mr Mike Poppek, who worked at Google for nearly 14 years in management, and his wife have three children, aged nine, seven and three.

His older children are allowed an hour of screen time a night on the computer in the living room, but only after homework is done and dinner has been served. The family makes no distinction between educational videos and interactive experiences and scrolling through information online during that hour.

"There's no way you can say 'no' to screens. It's not possible," he says. "They'll be at a huge disadvantage in their lives if they have no experience with this type of technology."

Ms Melanie Wendt, a school therapist at a public middle school in Silicon Valley, deals with these issues at work and at home.

The students she sees spend much of their time on their phones and playing video games.

She and her husband established boundaries for their own boys, aged 10 and eight.

Her older son has an iPad, which he uses one to two hours a week, and the boys have an Xbox. But they are not allowed to play shooting video games, instead spending time on Fifa and other sports games.

She feels the most important strategy to promote healthy online and real-life experiences is to be consistent.

She found that her sons are more aware of their own screen use and that of others. They will notice when they are out eating dinner and everyone at a table near them is engrossed in their phones. "I feel like I've raised awareness," she says.

She thinks it does not make sense to take a draconian approach to limiting technology use. "By cutting

something out of their life, it makes it more interesting. That's why we decided not to completely take it away," she adds.

Helping children and teens create consistent, compartmentalised time offline is key, though what that looks like can differ depending on children's ages and their susceptibility to overusing technology.

Keeping phones out of the bedroom at night and tracking, monitoring and shutting down usage with tools such as Apple's Screen Time or Google's Family Link can create consistent structure and conversations around awareness.

To help tweens and teens become more aware, I recommend parents require kids to do a little research

before downloading any new apps or opening new online accounts.

Who created the app? Have there been any recent related scandals in the news? Can they find out anything about the app's data privacy and cyber security issues?

This process of investigation can help kids reflect on how and where they should spend time online. And

it is no less applicable for apps that are marketed as educational, as the FBI recently warned.

As Instagram's Mr Dan Zigmund, a father of two teen daughters who have smartphones, puts it: "The basic issues around parenting and... helping kids make healthy choices are kind of the same."

WASHINGTON POST

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Places your mum warned you about...

... But which you should check out anyway for the beautiful landscapes, vibrant cultures and thriving local life



Clara Lock

Kenya's capital Nairobi has an unfortunate nickname – Nairobi – because of the high number of crime incidents there, such as assault, carjacking and robbery.

But beyond the frightening reputation and congested streets of the capital, Kenya is home to world-class safaris, exotic Maasai tribes and beautiful beaches.

The diversity of the East African country wowed Ms Jaclyn Seah, 35, who joined a small group tour there in 2016.

The freelance writer says: "I went to Kenya expecting beautiful savannahs and lush landscapes, but I was completely unprepared for the glory of the Kenyan Coast. Just south of Mombasa (a port city) were some of the most beautiful beaches and waters that I've seen in all my travels."

Kenya is not the only country that could use a public relations boost.

Egypt, quiet on the tourism front after the political turmoil that followed the Arab Spring uprising in 2011, has been trying to increase visitor arrivals in the past couple of years.

A new US\$1-billion (\$51.4-billion) Grand Egyptian Museum will open in 2020 and display King Tutankhamun's entire burial collection of 5,000 objects for the first time.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, long known for being strict with visas, welcomed about 1,000 tourists from 80 countries in December last year.

There are there to watch Formula E, a motor sports tournament using electric vehicles, as well as concerts by French DJ David Guetta and American band The Black-Eyed Peas.

This was two months after the alleged murder of Mr Jamal Khashoggi, a well-known journalist and critic of the Saudi government, in the country's consulate in Istanbul – for which the kingdom received negative publicity worldwide.

While your mother may want you to avoid places with notorious reputations, do not dismiss them out of fear or preconceptions.

If you explore these places with an open mind, you may discover their hidden beauty.

The Sunday Times rounds up some of these misunderstood destinations that you can safely visit in small group tours.

claral@sph.com.sg

Somaliland or Abkhazia, anyone?

Look at a world map and you will not find Somaliland, Western Sahara or Abkhazia.

This is because they are not technically countries.

Somaliland is an autonomous region in Somalia; Western Sahara is a disputed territory in Northern Africa between Mauritania and Morocco; and Abkhazia is a region within Georgia that has its own government yet lacks international recognition.

But you can still visit these unrecognised nations on a trip with Young Pioneer Tours, which runs tours to countries so far off the beaten track, you will be forgiven for not having heard of them before.

These include Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Kiribati, which are all among the 15 least visited countries in the world.

Mr John McGovern, the company's international tours manager, says: "The more we visited these places, the more we realised there is a lack of factual information as well as genuine person-to-person relationships with these countries, so even if they lack the tourist facilities of more developed countries, they give the traveller a more authentic experience."

In Somaliland, for instance, travellers can view 10,000-year-old cave paintings, swim in the Gulf of Aden and explore a mix of Ottoman, Persian and British architecture in the cities of Berbera and Hargeisa.

They will also visit a Syrian restaurant run by refugees from Damascus and have lunch at a Somaliland-Yemeni restaurant with Somaliland intellectual icons, who can give a political, social, historical and cultural introduction of the region.

To Mr McGovern, these local interactions are the most memorable part of the tour.

He says: "Best of all for me is sitting down for chats (tea), or chew chat (gum) with someone in a rural environment with the locals, who are among the friendliest people I have met."

He adds that while Somaliland is not recognised as a country, it has its own borders and a separate govern-



ment from Somalia, making it safe from the threats of piracy and terrorism that the latter is known for.

Guests should dress conservatively, as Somaliland is an Islamic region. For instance, female guests must cover their bodies if they wish to swim in the Gulf of Aden, which

is part of the tour itinerary.

Despite the "young" in their name, the company attracts guests in their 20s to 70s with one thing in common – they enjoy trips to far-flung destinations.

One of them is Singaporean Siti Aigah Jemly, 34, who has travelled with the company to 15 countries, including North Korea, Turkmenistan and Haiti.

Most recently, the civil servant rang in the new year on a five-day trip to Nauru, the least visited country in the world and an island located about 2,900km off Australia.

It is also the world's smallest republic, with a land area of just 21 sq km in comparison, Singapore measures 723.5 sq km.

There, she visited the parliament building, saw World War II remains and interacted with refugees hoping to seek asylum in Australia.

It was a fascinating glimpse into a forgotten corner of the world.

Ms Siti says: "It is satisfying to go to places that nobody else I know has gone. I like being able to enjoy unique experiences."

For prices and more information, go to www.youngpioneertrips.com.

Young Pioneer Tours organises trips to Somaliland, an autonomous region in Somalia.

PHOTO: SHANE HORAN, YOUNG PIONEER TOURS



Visitors can trek on glaciers, hike on mountains and camp under the stars in Northern Pakistan. PHOTO: WILL HATTON

Alpine peaks, glaciers in Pakistan

With jagged glaciers, lush green meadows and the sunlight glinting off towering alpine peaks, Mr Will Hatton's holiday snapshots look like they were taken in New Zealand or Switzerland.

So people are usually surprised to learn that the landscapes are in Pakistan, a country better known for military conflicts with India, terrorist attacks by suicide bombers, and when terrorist leader Osama Bin Laden was killed by United States forces.

These are the impressions Mr Hatton, 30, wants to change about the country he fell in love with on a backpacking trip in 2016.

The Briton was on an overland journey from Britain to Papua New Guinea when he visited Pakistan for the first time.

He did not know what to expect, but came away enthralled, recalling: "The six weeks I spent in Pakistan were some of the rawest, most spectacular travelling of my life. I've done multi-week hiking expeditions in Britain, Nepal and India – and they're very dangerous, but it made me fall in love with Pakistan."

He made friends with several Pakistanis, staying with a man and his family in the tiny mountain village of Ghulkin, and partying with a young man who called himself the "rich kid of Lahore".

Lahore is Pakistan's second most populous city and is known as its cultural capital.

The young man told Mr Hatton: "When people think of Pakistan, they think that this is a poor country filled with nothing but terrorists and sand."

The truth is, Pakistan has the most diverse landscapes in Asia

and Pakistanis are some of the friendliest people in the world."

Mr Hatton, an entrepreneur who also runs adventure travel blog The Broke Backpacker, saw a business opportunity.

In 2017, he conducted a group tour to Pakistan with 11 people, who he promoted on his Instagram account and was sold out in five days.

Since then, he has set up Epic Backpacker Tours and organised another four tours to Pakistan, with three more lined up this year.

During the tours, participants visit ancient mosques and fortresses, trek on glaciers, stay with local families and camp in the mountains under a bed of stars.

They also traverse the Karakoram highway, which is known as the highest paved international road in the world and is backed by beautiful mountain views.

Mr Hatton says: "By facilitating our guests' meetings with the locals, we can show that Pakistanis and foreigners alike are all human and help change perceptions on both sides."

Singaporean Taahira Ayoob, 27, is equally enamoured by the country.

She first visited in 2014, spending six months in Karachi – Pakistan's largest city and financial capital – on an internship with Dawn, the country's leading English newspaper.

She says: "Pakistan is special to me because I have friends there and access to music, food and relationships."

"It is not easy to get there, but when I meet my friends and hear about how their lives or the country has changed, it gives me a sense of comfort and familiarity."

A 15-day Pakistan tour by Epic Backpacker Tours (www.epicbackpackertours.com) costs US\$2,200 (\$53,004).



Rock My Adventure Tours, a company that runs small group flashpacking tours in countries across Africa, takes travellers to countries such as Morocco (above). PHOTO: HELEN DAVIES

See the good and bad of Africa

In his 2002 travel memoir *Dark Star Safari*, author Paul Theroux made a controversial journey from Cairo to Cape Town and wrote: "All news out of Africa is bad, but it made me want to go there."

His words inspired Ms Helen Davies so much that in 2009, she quit her job at multinational food manufacturing company Kellogg's and spent six months visiting nine African countries, including Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana and Malawi.

She left with a new-found appreciation for a continent she describes as one of the great enigmas of travel.

"I think that a lot of what we see on the news has traditionally been bad – civil wars, famine, disease, poverty – but Africa is much more than that."

There is so much innovation, hospitality and a deep sense of community that doesn't exist in the Western world," says the 58-year-old Briton.

During her travels, she experienced extremes.

She recalls a harrowing ferry crossing in Malawi where she and a friend spent two nights sleeping on the floor of the upper deck, on a boat that grew increasingly crowded with people, cargo and numerous bags of sardines – and that was on a first-class ticket.

Tours comprise eight to 12 people, who travel in a private minibus, staying in a mix of guesthouses, hotels and campsites.

Destinations include Sierra Leone, Morocco, Zambia and Botswana.

"There is a lot of poverty and in-

equality, and you will become very aware of your privilege as a traveller," she says.

She also forged strong bonds that have stood the test of time.

In Bagamoyo, a small town in Tanzania, she volunteered to run a summer school programme for some older youth who live in an orphanage called The Baobab Home, as well as other children in the neighbourhood.

Like most trips in Africa, the tour had its share of highs and lows.

While travelling from Nairobi to Maasai Mara National Park, the group experienced three hours of travelling on bumpy, unpaved roads – what is known as an "African massage".

"You've never appreciated tarmac as much when you don't have it," says Ms Seah.

But she also saw wonderful sights, such as the great migration of wildebeest, which is a staple at the Maasai Mara National Park, which she calls a "National Geographic moment".

This is the Africa Ms Davies wants her guests to experience fully.

She says: "I don't sugarcoat or hide the bad stuff. I simply show people the Africa I know and love – the delicious food, friendly people, awesome activities and the beauty of the land."

A 16-day tour in Kenya costs \$4,376 and other tour prices vary according to destination.

For more information, go to www.heleninwonderlust.co.uk/rock-my-adventure-africa-tours.

Tips to get you there and back safely

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

Before your trip, do some research on the appropriate clothes to wear, especially in conservative societies or if you intend to visit places of worship. If in doubt, a pair of linen pants and a light sleeveless top will keep you cool, modest and stylish no matter where you are in the world.

GET YOUR SHOTS

Four to six weeks before your trip, consult a traveller's clinic to find out what vaccinations or medications are needed in the region you are visiting.

For instance, yellow fever vaccinations and anti-malaria tablets may be recommended for parts of Africa and South America. For more information, go to www.ttsb.com.sg/travellers-health.

GET YOUR VISA

Check if you need a visa and how to apply for it on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) website. Go to www.mfa.gov.sg/ or www.heleninwonderlust.co.uk/rock-my-adventure-africa-tours.

REGISTER WITH MFA

Singaporeans should register online with MFA (register.mfa.gov.sg) each time they travel overseas, so consular staff can contact them quickly in a crisis.

STAY TOGETHER

Stick to the tour group and do not wander off on your own. In cities with high crime rates, guide know which areas are safe to visit, and which to avoid.

RESPECT LOCAL PRACTICES

Take heed of cultural sensitivities. Listen to your guide's advice about the country's etiquette, and do not be afraid to ask if you are unsure about the right behaviour. They will usually be happy to tell you more about their country.

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Lee Siew Hua
Travel Writer,
The Straits Times

On the trail of the Brontes and Austen

Lovers of classic novels will have fun at must-visit literary landmarks in England



Ong Sor Fern
Senior Culture Correspondent

Writer Samuel Johnson once declared: "except that when a man isised of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford".

That was undeniably a romanticised vision since London in the 18th century was an overcrowded city bursting at the seams from unplanned urban expansion, non-existent sewage systems and a polluted Thames river that also supplied the city's drinking water. The dangers of drinking water indirectly contributed to the popularity of gin.

But as I discovered on a recent trip, is experiencing a resurgence in, not just London, but across England.

Practically every bar I passed was offering gin and tonic, a bracing beer, or to wad off the winter chill, and the neighbourhood pubs offered a range of gins, with Sipsmith's lemon drizzle and Warner Edwards' rhubarb gin toping the popularity lists.

It is easy to become jaded with England's familiar offerings, given the plethora of exciting new destinations crowding Singapore's well-connected airport. But, on my jaunt through England, I have come to realise that part of its charm is its constancy and historicity. And as an English literature nerd, there are must-visit literary landmarks.

So here are two fun weekend jaunts and a few must-dos in London if you are planning to visit Old Blighty, rally-ho!

BRONTE'S YORKSHIRE

Being a long-time fan of Emily Bronte, I built my weekend trip to Yorkshire around a pilgrimage to the Bronte Parsonage Museum. As it turned out, the village of Haworth where the parsonage is located offered unexpected pleasures.

The weekend was Steam-punk Weekend. This meant the streets of Haworth were full of cost players togged out in their steam-punk best, which brightened up a dreary day tremendously.

But it also meant that the few bed and breakfasts in town were all booked out. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise as I ended up discovering an equally charming bed and breakfast in the neighbouring town of Thornton.

WHAT TO DO

Bronte Parsonage Museum

The museum is where the famous Bronte siblings - Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne - lived and died. It is run by the Bronte Society, one of the oldest literary societies in the world, and is a well-preserved home, with plenty of original Bronte family possessions.

My guide explained that when the family patriarch Patrick, who outlived his children, died, many items in the Bronte home were bought by Haworth villagers. The village families kept the items as cherished heirlooms.



The Jane Austen Centre has a waxwork of the author (above) while the dining room table where the Bronte sisters wrote their novels can be seen at the Bronte Parsonage Museum (right).



The house was bought by Sir James Roberts and gifted to the society in 1928, and once the museum was established, many people donated their Bronte heirlooms.

However, one of the most valuable items had to be bought at auction. The dining room table - where Charlotte wrote Jane Eyre, Emily penned Wuthering Heights and Anne composed The Tenant Of Wildfell Hall - was bought for more than £580,000.

I opted for a personal guided tour (£50, or £586, a person; £75 for two) - definitely a must-do for Bronte fans as the guides are knowledgeable. Plus, you will get to see the library, which is generally not open to the public.

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The house's offerings are many and interesting, especially if you include skin and bath products. You can pick up mini bath bombs (four for £5) or bath melts shaped like cupcakes (£2.50 each). In the curio section, you can buy the articulated skeleton of a crow (£18.50) or an anatomical model of the human heart (£49).

SHOP
The Cabinet Of Curiosities

Think Lush meets Victorian apothecary with a dash of oddball curio shop. This shop with its elaborately curlicued signboard is a magical space, decked out in authentic period shop fittings, crystal chandeliers and the odd human skeleton.

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EAT
The King's Arms

After a morning at the Bronte museum, head down Church Street to this cosy old-school pub, which dishes out classic hearty Sunday

roasts. I had the pork roast, which came with a giant Yorkshire pudding that was bigger than my fist as well as a generous pile of cabbage, carrots and peas.

And, of course, you need an ale to complete the traditional pub lunch.

This pub offers four beers on tap, brewed by local brewery Bridgehouse and named after the Brontes.

Try the Clarendon Pale Ale, which is "fruity with a hoppy finish".

If you prefer something stronger, Branwell Porter Ale has "strong toffee and liquorice notes".

For a personal guided tour (£50, or £586, a person; £75 for two) - definitely a must-do for Bronte fans as the guides are knowledgeable. Plus, you will get to see the library, which is generally not open to the public.

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The compact bathroom in my room reminded me of Japanese facilities, with a toilet and shower as well as a warm towel packed into a corner of the room suite.

The Jane Austen Centre is located a few doors from her actual family home and some hardcore Janeites (as Austen fans are known) might think that it is a wee bit too touristy.

Staff members, dressed in period costume, will talk you through the

modest eatery is a little off the tourist path, but the fact that it is patronised mainly by locals is its best recommendation. The crowd starts streaming in at 7pm, so make reservations if you are planning to dine here.

The special is the fish and chips, offered in three variations - cod (£13.95), haddock (£13.95) and hake (£14.95). The beer batter is light and the texture is closer to Japanese tempura with its greaseless crunch than the heavier batter of old-fashioned versions.

The grilled skate wing (£13.95).

Food offerings in London have improved by leaps and bounds in the past two decades.

I remember when petit pois on a menu meant overboiled peas and sandwiches were cold and soggy offerings.

Although the British still have a habit of overstuffing savoury dishes and adding too much sugar to their sweets, there's plenty of great food in London.

Here are three places I like.

The Anchor And Hope's braised rabbit (left) tastes like superb kampung chicken, fragrant but not gamey, and Bar Doura's Octopus with Sweet Potato (left below) has a smoky, perfectly grilled octopus tentacle with thick-cut sweet potato chips.

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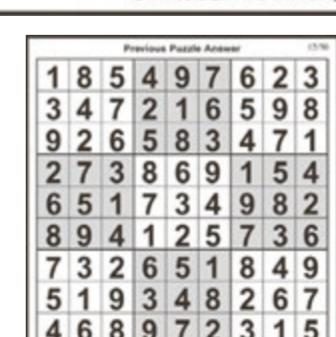
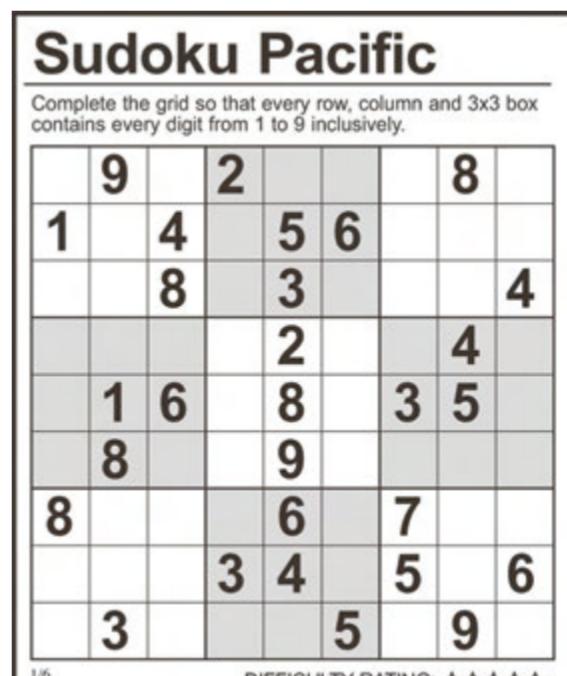
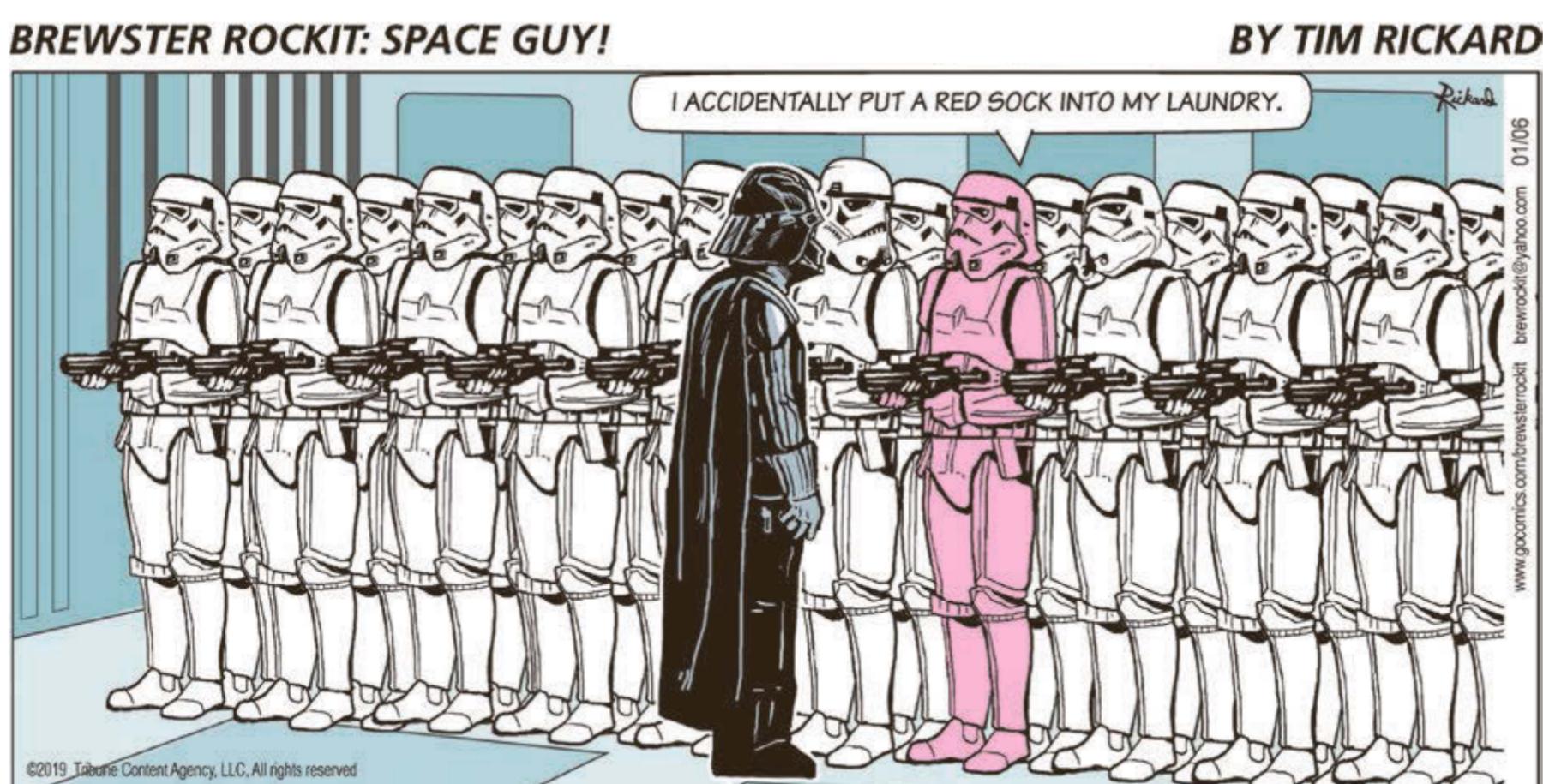
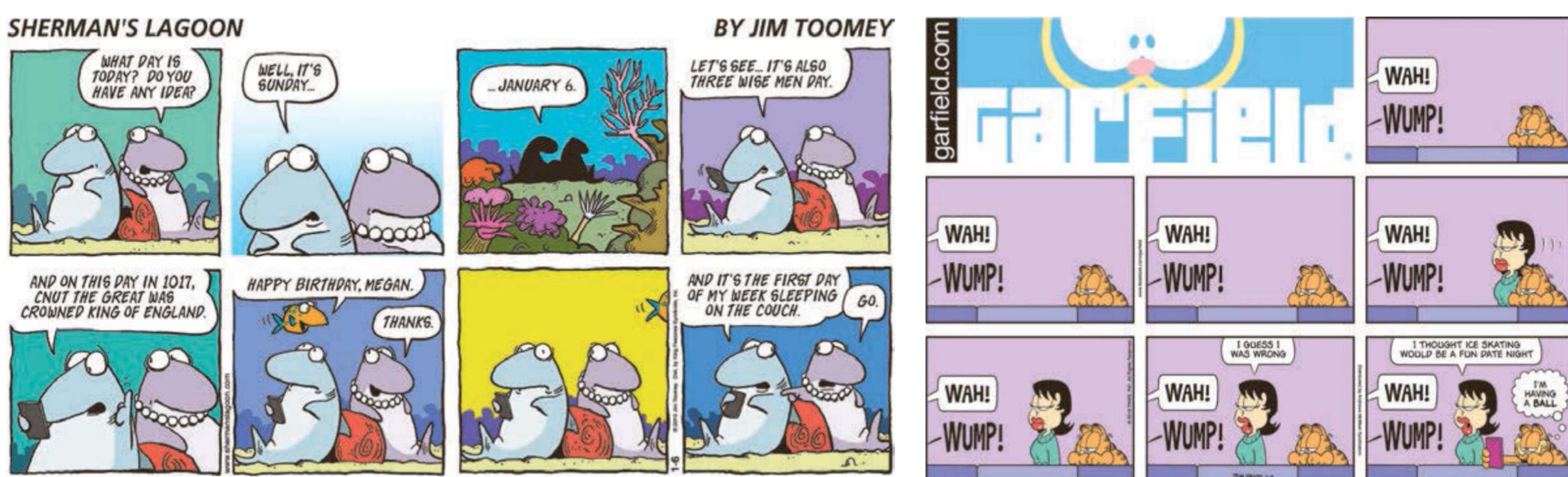
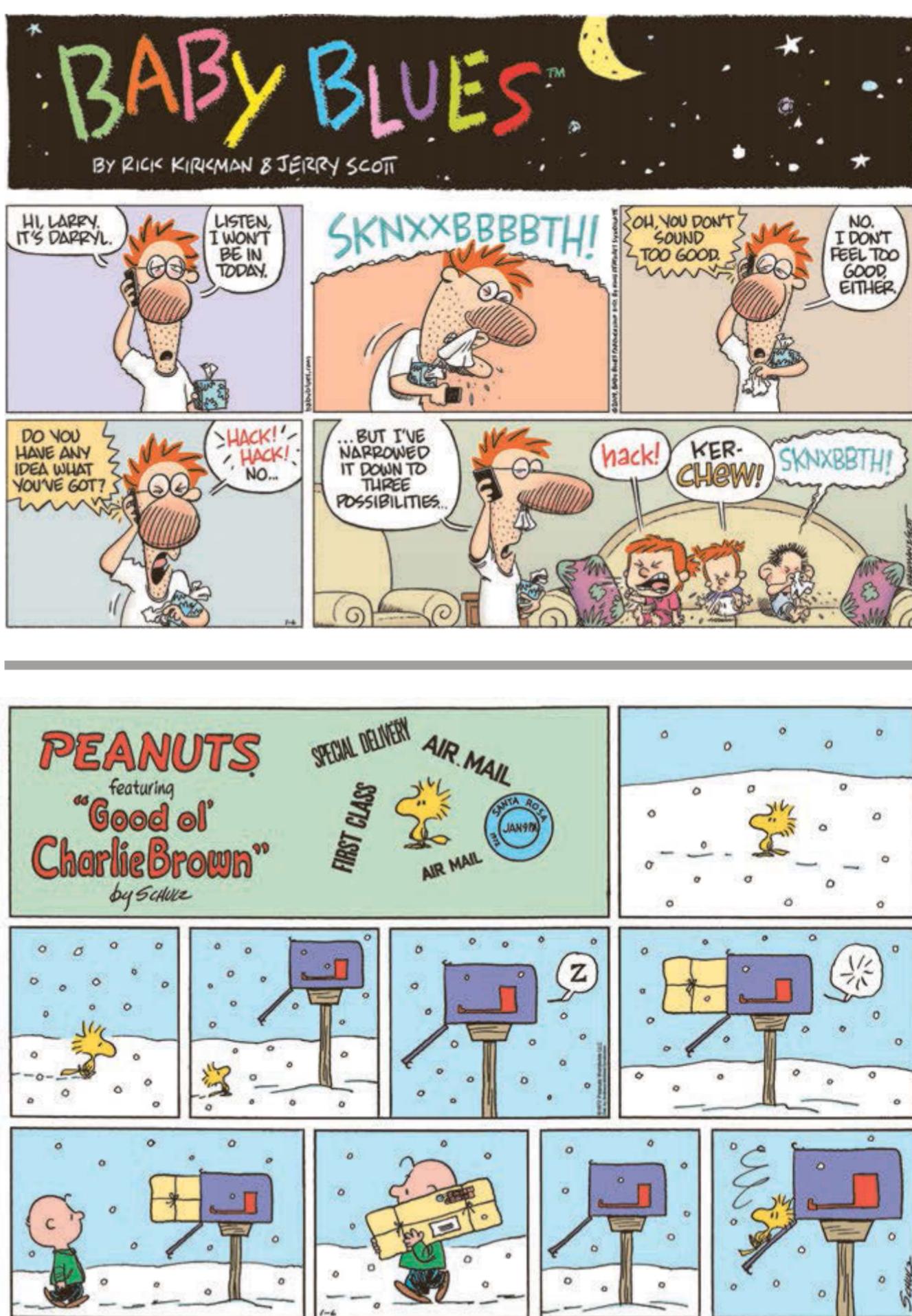
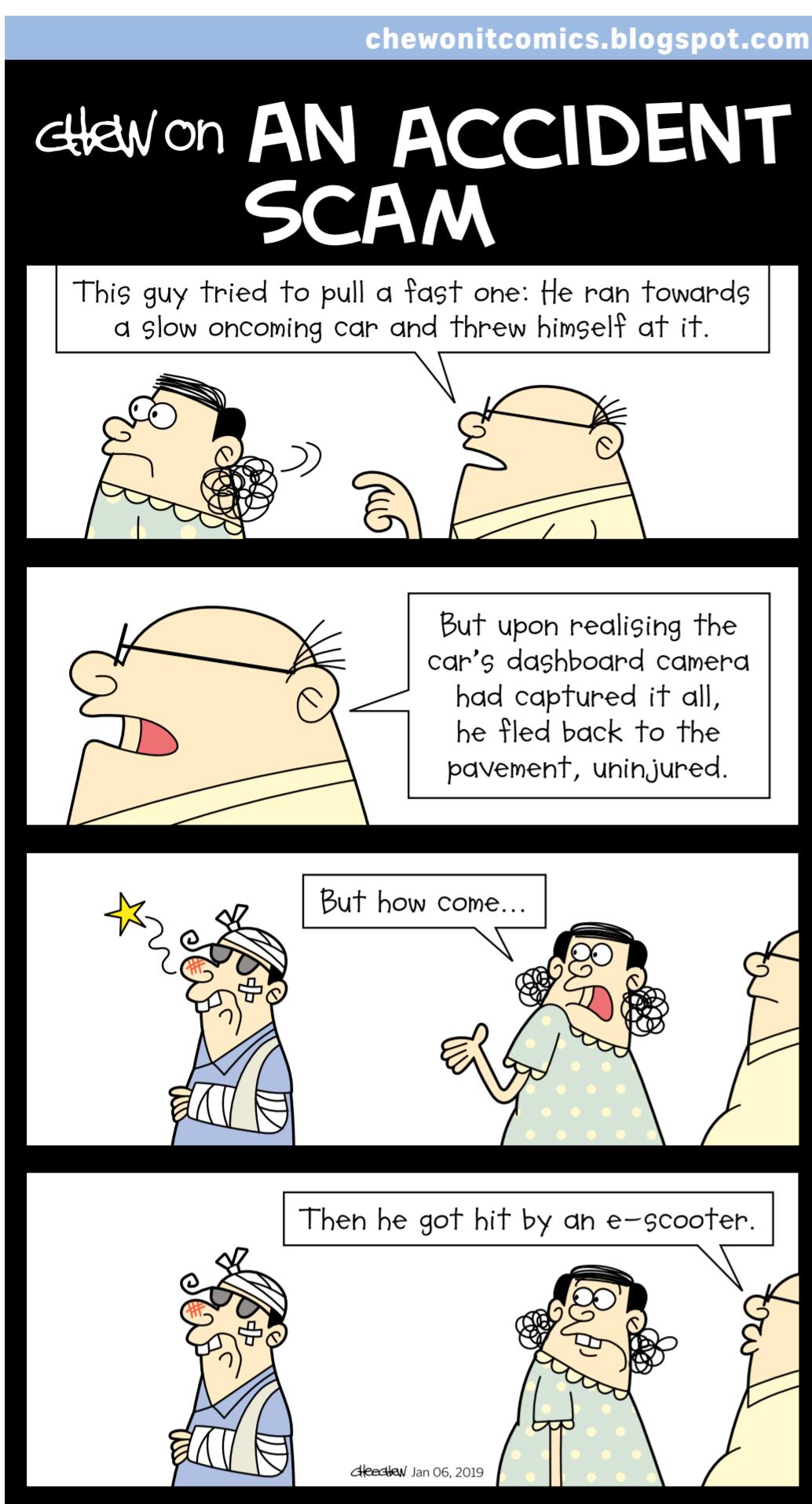
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Free to air**CHANNEL 5****AM**

6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (Variety)

7.00 The Dr Oz Show 8 (HD) (Info-Ed)

8.00 Don't Make Us Invisible (HD) (Info-Ed)

8.30 Wheel Of Fortune 35 (HD) (Variety)

9.30 Secret Meat Business (Info-Ed)

10.00 Andre Rieu: Welcome To My World (Cul)

11.00 This Is Opera (HD) (Cul)

PM

12.00 Meat And Greed 2 (HD) (Variety)

12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (HD) (Info-Ed)

1.00 So You Think You Can Dance 13 (HD) (Variety)

2.50 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (Variety)

3.00 World's Best Beaches (Variety)

4.00 Buzzing Hawkers (Variety)

5.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (Variety)

5.30 Films & Stars (PG) (Variety)

6.00 Our Makan Places: Lost And Found 6 (HD) (Info-Ed)

6.30 Cine On 5: Everest (PG) (Movie) (Premiere)

9.00 News 5 (HD)

9.30 Micro Monsters (CC) (Info-Ed) (Season Premiere)

10.30 Carpool Karaoke 2018 Special (PG) (Variety)

11.30 Divided (US) (HD) (PG13) (Variety)

AM

12.00 The Dr Oz Show 9 (HD) (PG13) (Info-Ed)

12.50 Plastic Surgery Is My Business (PG) (Info-Ed)

1.20 Andre Rieu: Welcome To My World (Culture)

2.20 This Is Opera (HD) (Culture)

3.20 Divided (US) (HD) (PG13) (Variety)

3.50 Films & Stars (PG) (Variety)

4.20 Wheel Of Fortune 35 (HD) (Variety)

5.10 The Dr Oz Show 8 (HD) (Info-Ed)

CHANNEL 8**AM**

6.00 Food Source 3 (HD) (Variety)

7.00 Portrait Of Home (Drama)

9.00 Happy Friends (Schoolkids)

9.30 New Doraemon (Schoolkids)

10.00 Little Incredible Explorer (Children) (Debut)

10.30 Mark Your Calendar (Children) (Debut)

11.00 Tuesday Report - Ninety Years Young (CC) (Info-Ed)

11.30 One Hundred Tastes Of Taiwan 2 (HD) (Info-Ed)

PM 12.00 The Quarters (PG) (CC) (Drama)

12.00 Please Remember That I Love You (CC) (Info-Ed)

2.30 Say It! (Variety)

3.30 Home Dining (CC) (Variety)

4.30 If Only I Could... (PG) (CC) (Drama)

6.30 Singapore Today (HD) (News)

7.00 Spring Flower (PG) (CC) (Drama)

9.00 Foodie Sunday (CC) (V) (Debut)

10.00 News Tonight (HD) (News)

10.30 Discover 30 Degrees North Latitude (CC) (Variety)

11.30 Frontline (Current Affairs)

AM

12.00 The Legend Of S (PG) (CC) (Drama)

12.00 Unriddle (PG) (Drama)

4.00 The Deer And The Cauldron (HD) (PG) (Drama)

11.30 Foodie Sunday (CC) (V) (Debut)

10.00 News Tonight (HD) (News)

10.30 Discover 30 Degrees North Latitude (CC) (Variety)

11.30 Frontline (Current Affairs)

CHANNEL U

AM

8.00 Home Shopping (Infomercial)

10.00 Come Sing With Me 2 (Variety)

PM

12.00 Big Big World 2 (Info-Ed)

12.30 Food Quest 2 (Info-Ed)

13.00 Hey DJ (CC) (Info-Ed)

2.00 Business As Usual (CC) (Info-Ed)

3.00 Run Jang Mi (PG) (CC) (Drama)

5.00 Lady With Class (PG) (CC) (Drama)

7.00 Shake It Up (Variety)

8.30 Approaching Science 8 (Info-Ed)

9.00 Jealousy Incarnate (PG) (CC) (Drama)

11.00 News Tonight (News)

11.30 Shake It Up (Variety)

AM

1.00 Approaching Science 8 (Info-Ed)

1.30 Lord Of Shanghai (PG) (CC) (Drama)

2.30 Close

CHANNEL NEWSASIA

AM

6.00 Singapore Tonight

6.30 Correspondents' Diary

7.00 News Now

7.30 In Search Of Umami

8.00 News Now

8.30 Edible Wild

9.00 News Now

9.30 Made In Singapore

10.02 Conversation With

10.30 Super Octogenarians

11.00 News Now

11.30 Correspondents' Diary

PM

12.00 News Now

12.30 In Search Of Umami

1.02 Japan Hour (English Subtitles)

2.00 News Now

2.30 Money Mind

3.00 News Now

3.30 Asia Business First Weekend

4.02 Conversation With

4.30 Super Octogenarians

5.00 News Now

5.30 In Search Of Umami

6.00 News Now

6.30 Correspondents' Diary

7.02 Asia Business First Weekend

7.30 Welcome 2 Taiwan: Taiwan Holiday (English Subtitles)

8.00 PrimeTime Asia

8.30 In Search Of Umami (CC)

9.02 Aerial Asia (CC)

10.00 Singapore Tonight

10.30 On The Red Dot - Old Enough! (CC)

AM

11.02 Enemy Within

AM

12.00 News Now

12.30 Welcome 2 Taiwan: Taiwan Holiday (English Subtitles)

1.02 Asia Business First Weekend

2.02 Aerial Asia

3.02 In Search Of Umami

4.02 Enemy Within

5.02 Aerial Asia

6.02 Close

SURIA

AM

10.00 Kosmopolitan (HD) (PG) (CC) (Drama)

11.00 Ole Ole Temasya 2 (HD) (CC) (Info-Ed)

PM

12.00 Balik Sekolah (HD) (Drama)

12.30 Suami Tanpa Cinta (HD) (Drama)

1.30 #Urbanista (HD) (CC) (Info-Ed)

2.00 Isteri Tuan Ihsan (Drama)

3.00 Ceria Popstar (HD) (Variety)

4.00 Meh Sandar Pada Aku (HD) (PG) (Drama)

5.00 Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (Drama)

6.00 Tahu Nahu (HD) (Schoolkids)

6.30 Cakap-Cakap (Variety)

7.00 The Project (CC) (Info-Ed) (Debut)

7.30 Romantika 8 (HD) (CC) (Info-Ed)

8.00 Berita (HD) (News)

8.30 Lagenda (HD) (CC) (Info-Ed)

9.30 Setia Menunggumu (PG) (CC) (Drama)

10.00 Tuan Ihsan (HD) (Schoolkids)

11.00 Lego Ninjago - Sons Of Garmadon (HD) (Schoolkids)

11.30 Sindbad & The 7 Galaxies (Schoolkids)

12.00 Close

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM

7.30 Magazine: Omnisport. TV

8.00 The Football Review

8.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Formosa Dreamers Vs CLS Knights Indonesia

10.30 Other Sports: Ultra Pirineu 2018

11.00 Magazine: Omnisport. TV

11.30 National Basketball League Round 12 Brisbane Bullets Vs Melbourne United (Live)

PM

1.30 The Football Review

2.00 Magazine: Trans World Sport 2019

3.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Formosa Dreamers Vs Singapore Slingers (Live)

5.00 Wrestling: WWE Afterburn (PG)

6.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Saigon Heat Vs Mono Vampire Basketball Club (Live)

8.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 San Miguel Alab Pil

FEAST ON THESE

Cruffins, mochi – stuffed into all sorts of sweet treats – and the gussied-up chiffon cake are among the food trends of 2019



Bakery Brera in Empress Road offers four flavours of cruffins – (from left) Peanut Butter, Nutty Salted Caramel, Kaya and Lemon Curd.

Cruffins

Over the past few years, the cruffin – a muffin-shaped croissant hybrid – has enjoyed a slow but steady rise.

Conrad Centennial Singapore was one of the earliest to introduce the pastry here in 2015 and Bakery Brera in Empress Road launched it in 2016.

As there was no hype then, Bakery Brera owner Thirina Low, 54,

shelved it after a few months. She reintroduced it in July last year and it has since become an Insta-famous star. She sells about 100 cruffins a day, says, and double the number on weekends.

She says: "The uniqueness of cruffin lies in the fact that it allows local bakers to incorporate a variety of fillings into an already irresistible,

well-loved croissant baked in the muffin shape. You never get tired of it because you get to rotate among different flavours, be it trending or not-so-flavours."

Bakery Brera offers four flavours – Nutty Salted Caramel, Lemon Curd, Peanut Butter and Kaya – at \$4.50 each.

Other places that sell cruffins

include The Coffee Academics, which has outlets at Scotts Square, Raffles City and Ocean Financial Centre; and The Terrace at Conrad Centennial Singapore, which offers cruffins – raspberry and kaya flavours – at \$3 each.

Chef Pang Kok Keong of Antoinette patisserie is also working on his version of the cruffin.

PHOTOS: ANTOINETTE, ARTEA, BAKE CHEESE TART, BREADTALK GROUP, DESMOND WEE, HEYTEA, NY NIGHT MARKET, PERANAKAN KHEK, ST FILE, TAN HSUEH YUN



Eunice Quek
Food Correspondent

Hello tiger tea, striped with rivulets of brown sugar and topped with lashings of boba pearls. Bye bye cheese tea and fruit tea, which once made the fortunes of many a bubble-tea merchant.

With the new year comes new food fad contenders, some just freshly landed here, others made in Singapore and fast taking off.

In the bread scene, the newly

arrived cruffin – a cross between a croissant and a muffin – may be said to have originated from Lune Croissanterie in Melbourne in 2013 and popularised by San Francisco's Mr Holmes Bakehouse in 2015, but it has been gaining traction here on social media.

Mochi has become the stuffing of choice, snipped and stretched and snuck into all manner of desserts.

Ditto for jazzed-up chiffon cakes that amp up the plain and humble chiffon cake. Singaporeans once knew and loved on its own, with either cream or a glaze – or both and a plethora of other toppings.

The next "It" chip is indubitably truffle-flavoured, with at least 10 brands crowding supermarket and online store shelves.

As this foodie nation gets swept

up in the next big Insta-worthy dish or trophy beverage and super-long queues form, it drives yet more business owners and chefs to whip up more gravity-defying and over-the-top creations.

It has become all about what looks good to have and to hold, to shoot and to post, than just to eat.

Yet, it is those that tick the flavour box too that go beyond

trending to become a mainstay. To kick off the new year, The Sunday Times checks out seven noteworthy trends which have spawned queues likely to block your path in a nearby mall soon.

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(Clockwise from above) Offerings from bubble-tea shops Nayuki, Heytea, Artea and Tiger Sugar.

Bubble tea and more

Bubble-tea fans have been lapping up the waves of cheese tea and fruit tea that hit Singapore's shores. But in recent months, the craze for brown sugar milk (sans tea) has been all the rage.

It is basically fresh milk, ice and chewy pearls cooked in brown sugar. Fans of the drink enjoy the caramel notes, similar to gula melaka, that make the drink delicious and seemingly worth the wait.

More than two months after Tiger Sugar opened its first store at Capitol Piazza, it serves a menu of bubble tea that is less than 30 minutes long. It opened a second outlet at Chinatown Point last month and is opening a third one at Paragon on Saturday.

Tiger Sugar is one of at least 10 Taiwanese brands to enter Singapore last year and it is expanding fast like many other brands. After all, the global bubble-tea industry is worth up to US\$50 billion (\$56.8 billion) and the drink has become a staple for many Singaporeans.

It is no longer enough to ask about tea origins or whether the pearls are made in-house.

Tiger Sugar's ice machines from Britain produce "whisky-grade ice" made with filtered water, while Winnie's Singapore – a brand from Taiwan – is a start-up that has started to replicate the success of Nan-tou, Taiwan, where tea farms are located. Winnie's opened last month at Galaxis in Fusionopolis and has

more outlets in the works. Its Singapore specials include salted egg yolk milk-topped drinks.

Over at VivoCity, home-grown brand Artea and Nayuki from Shenzhen, China, boast chic cafes which serve bubble tea and more.

Artea – with its white and blue palette and flower wall – serves soufflé pancakes, while the stylish Nayuki sells buns. Nayuki was brought in by the BreadTalk Group, which is also behind the entrance of another Shenzhen tea brand, TaiGai, in Singapore in September last year.

Jeffrey Wong, managing director of brand development for the group, adds that at least seven more TaiGai and Nayuki stores will open here this year. Nayuki's second outlet opens at the redeveloped Funan mall by the end of April.

Chinese tea brand Heytea opens its second outlet – a lighthouse-themed cafe in Clarke Quay – at the end of this month. It will also launch alcoholic tea drinks including the mojito-based Spring Fling, Japanese plum wine-based Summer Siesta, tequila-based Autumn Ashes and Winter Solace, which uses Wulangpu tea.

Expect even more overseas brands to enter Singapore this year, such as Jenitudan from Taiwan, which started as a pustulite stall. It is fast-food chain and is said to replicate the success of quality of Nan-tou, Taiwan, where tea farms are located. Winnie's opened last month at Galaxis in Fusionopolis and has



Baked cheese tarts are no longer bagging as many buyers.

On the decline

After a food trend has lost its novelty, it can die down as quickly as it was hyped up as fickle diners are quick to gobble up the next fad.

So the likes of baked cheese tarts, frozen yogurt and castella cakes (soft and fluffy egg sponge cakes) no longer see mad queues.

Although Spanish frozen yogurt chain Llaollao returned in June last year, its exit by the end of 2017 already overshadowed the end of the soft-serve dessert craze. Another frozen yogurt brand, Yole, entered the market, but it never saw the same snaking queues Llaollao enjoyed when it first opened.



Food and drinks coloured with the blue pea flower were Instagram-worthy, but the flower has barely any taste.

Blue was the food colour of choice last year, with many eateries offering food and drinks using the natural colouring of the blue pea flower.

In drinks, the blue pea flower extract reacts to the acidity of lemon juice by turning purple when they are mixed together. This concoction created many "galaxy drinks" made for the camera, but were quite ordinary in flavour as the flower has barely any taste.



Castella cake shops no longer see mad queues.

The new year also bid goodbye to unicorn- and mermaid-themed food – from candy floss to lurid coloured drinks – although they are likely to make a temporary comeback at festive bazaars, a haven for fancy food offerings.

Other trends that have quietened down include the rash of stores selling Hawaiian dish poki (cubed and marinated raw fish) as well as Hong Kong-inspired egglet waffles.

Mochi in everything

Japan's popular New Year food – mochi (pounded Japanese rice cake) – no longer just a stand-alone dessert snack. It has crept into everything from ice cream to bread.

Home-grown cafe brand Brother Bird offers an unconventional range of mochi croissants, mochi kouign amann and mochi doughnuts with soft serve. The mochi adds not only a chewy texture to the crisp pastries, but, in the case of the Rose & Raspberry with Lychee Mochi Croissant, also imparts a lychee flavour.

Do not forget to try Haagen-Dazs' mochi ice cream collection, which is available in supermarkets. Flavours include tiramisu mochi and cream cheese mochi.

Expect more mochi delights to be rolled out in the lead-up to Chinese New Year, such as Antoinette's Hong Bao Buns (above, \$10 or \$25). The bread is infused with red

dragonfruit and filled with house-made mochi with black sugar, lightly candied yam and sweet potato, as well as pork floss and salted egg.

This year, with Taiwanese bakery Wu Pao Chun slated to open at Capitol Piazza, foodies can also look forward to brown sugar mochi bread.



Special butter

It has become de rigueur for high-end restaurants to serve specially sourced butter or homemade flavoured butter for diners to pair with their bread.

Two-Michelin-starred French restaurant Odette at National Gallery Singapore dishes out lardo butter, while French restaurant Jaan at Sofitel The Sail (above) offers Beeron butter (above) from dairy farms from chef Kirk Westaway's home in south-west England.

On serving lardo butter, chef Julien Royer of Odette says: "It is an homage to a tradition back home in Auvergne, France, where we eat a slice of sourdough with a thin slice of lard."

This practice has extended beyond fine-dining establishments.

Restaurant LeVeL33 at Marina Bay Financial Centre offers yeast beer butter. Le Binchotan, a French-Japanese restaurant in Amoy Street, takes it up a notch with charcoal and carrot-puree butter.



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The large (\$38) version is available at its Alley On 25 dining cluster (tel: 6408-1288) from Jan 14 to Feb 25. Its other flavours (\$4.50, \$12 or \$32) – pandan, bandung (rose), black sesame, banana, yam, durian, chocolate and coconut – are still available.

Over at Violet Oon Singapore's



The humble chiffon cake has gone modern with different flavours of cream or a glaze as well as toppings and fillings.

For Chinese New Year, chef-owner Pang Kok Keong of Antoinette patisserie is launching Abundantly (\$38), a chiffon cake infused with purple sweet potato and topped with a thin circle of black gula melaka crinch and desiccated coconut tossed in a gula melaka syrup, all coated in a buttercream frosting.

To add more texture to the chiffon cake, release salty cheese cream that drapes over it.

The confection is also lavishly topped with black and gold tapioca pearls steeped in black sugar, lightly candied sweet potato and yam cubes, and gold chocolate coins, mangoes and fish.

At Pandan Mochi Chiffon Cake (above), for example, features salted gula melaka mochi and the cake is coated in cream and roasted coconut flakes.

Its two other flavours are Jasmine Mochi Chiffon Cake – with jasmine tea-infused chiffon sponge and raspberry mochi – and Passionfruit Mochi Chiffon Cake, with passionfruit curd and mochi.

Each whole cake costs \$48.

Low says: "We kept getting requests to jazz up the chiffon cake for celebrations. I love mochi and it fits the traditional vibe of the brand too. The thin layer of mochi adds a textural surprise without weighing it down."



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Singapore Cooks

Experimental baker



Ms Sarah Tan gets her inspiration from eateries she dines at or from Internet recipes and she is not afraid to make mistakes

Eunice Quek
Food Correspondent

When part-time communications officer Sarah Tan ordered a 400g bag of dried lavender, she did not realise how much she was getting.

Even after giving batches away, she was still left with three big portions of the fragrant flower.

She says with a chuckle: "While 400g does not sound like a lot, I had forgotten that each flower is so light. It's like ordering 400g of feathers."

"And I can't just use a lot of it at a go for food or drinks as the lavender flavour can be very strong and overpowering."

So besides making her "sleepy digestion tea" concoction of lemon juice, ginger, mint and lavender, she pairs lavender with Earl Grey tea and adapts a lemon pound cake recipe she found online.

For the cake, she recommends using Earl Grey tea from British tea brand Twinings as its tea bag contents are of a powdery consistency. This allows some of the tea leaf bits to go through the sieve when the infused buttermilk and tea are strained.

Both the infused buttermilk and tea in the recipe are a must, she says, to pack on more flavour from the Earl Grey tea. In her first experiment, she baked the cake with only an Earl Grey lavender tea infusion and felt the flavour was too light.

The result of her experiments is an aromatic Earl Grey lavender pound cake, an 8cm-long mini loaf perfect for breakfast or a teatime snack. The batter can also be used to bake one whole 9-inch cake, or 12 muffins.

Her love for baking started in primary school, when she first learnt how to bake an orange butter cake from her mother. "I would help her and make a mess of everything. My job was to beat eggs and sift flour. I would then sit in front of the oven in anticipation," recalls Ms Tan, whose 29-year-old husband is a corporate events planner.

Now, she gets her inspiration from cafes and restaurants that she dines at, or from Internet recipes. And the experimental baker is not afraid to make mistakes.

Giggling, she takes out a chocolate mousse cake with a red mirror glaze from her refrigerator and says: "Doesn't this look like ang ku kueh?" Ms Tan explains that she did not use enough gelatin for the mirror glaze.

Next, she takes out her sourdough bread, which she baked in a muffin tray. However, the baking paper had stuck to the bread.

She says: "All these learning lessons make baking fun. Even trying out different brands of butter and flour for baking has taught me a lot."

Other bakes in her repertoire include red velvet cake, carrot cake, Christmas fruit cake and moist chocolate cake with sour cream. For Chinese New Year, she is likely to make pineapple tarts and is now working on perfecting her shortcrust pastry.

Ms Tan does not rule out opening a baking business one day. She already has an Oh My Sweet account (@ohohmysweet) on Instagram and labels to stick on her creations.

She says: "I thought it would be fun to brand my bakes first, so that I'm ready if I ever start something. My concern is that running a business would require a lot of work and take the fun out of baking."

euniceq@sph.com.sg

Ms Sarah Tan, whose love for baking began in primary school, does not rule out opening a baking business one day.

ST PHOTOS: TIMOTHY DAVID

EARL GREY LAVENDER POUND CAKE



INGREDIENTS

For the Earl Grey lavender milk (prep one day before baking)
2 tea bags of Earl Grey tea
1/2 cup whole milk
1Tbs dried lavender

For the Earl Grey lavender buttermilk (prep one to two hours before baking)
1/2Tbs white vinegar or lemon juice

For the Earl Grey lavender tea
1 tea bag of Earl Grey tea
1/2Tbs dried lavender
1/2 cup hot water

For the cake
1 1/2 cups plain flour
3/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp baking powder
1/4 tsp baking soda
115g unsalted butter
3/4 cup sugar
3 eggs

For the Earl Grey lavender glaze
1/2 cup icing sugar
Lavender flowers for garnish

METHOD

- For the Earl Grey lavender milk: Cut open the tea bags and pour the contents into an airtight jar. Add the whole milk and dried lavender, cover and refrigerate overnight.
- For the Earl Grey lavender buttermilk: Add 1/2 tablespoon of white vinegar or lemon juice to the milk mixture from step 1. Leave to curdle in the refrigerator for no more than two to three hours.
- For the Earl Grey lavender tea: Cut open the tea bag and pour the contents into a bowl. Add the dried lavender and pour in the hot water. Leave to cool.
- When ready to bake: Preheat oven to 175 deg C.
- In a small bowl, strain the Earl Grey buttermilk mixture from step 2

through a sieve. Do the same with the Earl Grey lavender tea from step 3. Then, combine 90ml of the buttermilk mixture with two tablespoons of the Earl Grey lavender tea. Set aside.

- In a separate medium bowl, sift the flour, salt, baking powder and baking soda. Whisk the ingredients to combine.
- Using an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar on medium speed for a few minutes until light and fluffy. It should be a very pale yellow.
- Add eggs, one at a time, and continue to mix until incorporated.
- Turn the mixer to low speed and add the flour mixture from step 6 in three parts, alternating with the Earl Grey mixture from step 5.
- Grease a mini loaf pan tray (each loaf is 8cm in length) with butter and dust with flour. You can also use a muffin tray or make one cake in a 9-inch loaf tin.
- Scoop batter into each mini loaf tin and lightly tap the tin on the table to remove any air pockets inside the batter.
- Bake for about 30 minutes, or until a skewer inserted comes out clean. Muffins would require the same timing, while a 9-inch pound cake will take about 50 minutes to one hour.
- Allow to cool in the pan before turning out the cakes onto a wire rack. Let the cakes cool completely before glazing.
- For the glaze: Whisk the icing sugar and one to two tablespoons of the remaining Earl Grey lavender tea from step 3 in a bowl until you get a smooth paste-like texture.
- Place the cakes on a wire rack over a baking sheet or tray. Spoon glaze over the cakes, letting it run down the sides.
- Garnish with dried lavender flowers. The cakes can be kept in the refrigerator for one to two weeks. To serve, just re-heat in the microwave for 20 to 30 seconds.

Makes 8 mini loaf cakes, 12 muffins or a 9-inch pound cake

Open for business



JUMBO SEAFOOD ION ORCHARD

Home-grown seafood brand Jumbo Seafood has unveiled its newest outlet at Ion Orchard – its first restaurant in Singapore's premium shopping belt.

Jumbo Seafood Ion Orchard has introduced new and outlet-exclusive dishes, from dim sum and pao fan (a soupy porridge-like dish) to seafood signatures.

Besides daily lunch and dinner, the outlet also serves high tea on weekends and public holidays.

For the first time, Jumbo Seafood's award-winning Chilli Crab is presented in bite-sized portions as a dim sum item – delicate crab meat in a sweet and spicy chilli crab gravy provides the moreish filling for the Baked Jumbo Chilli Crab Puffs (\$8.80++) and Pan Fried Jumbo

Chilli Crab Buns (\$8.80++)

Other dim sum creations include steamed rice rolls with prawns and laksa sauce (\$6.80++) and steamed prawn dumplings with black truffle (\$6.80++).

There are two pao fan options: king prawns and fragrant rice in rich seafood broth (\$38++) above) – jasmine rice steeped in a prawn broth made by simmering prawn shells for several hours; and live Boston lobster and fragrant rice in rich seafood (\$78++)

Where: 04-09/10 Ion Orchard, 2 Orchard Turn
Open: 11.30am to 3.30pm and 6 to 10.30pm daily; high tea 2.30 to 5.30pm (weekends and public holidays)
Info: Call 6737-3435 or go to www.jumboseafood.com.sg

PHOTOS: ARTEA
JUMBO SEAFOOD,
LOBSTERS & ICE
CREAM

ARTEA

Chinese tea brand Artea, which is inspired by the fusion of art and tea, has opened its first overseas outlet in Singapore.

The flower-themed outlet at VivoCity is designed by a young craft artist from China. The floral art is aimed at drawing youngsters to drop by for Instagram-worthy photos.

The Signature Fruit Tea (\$8.20 nett, right) is available with seven different kinds of fresh fruit – watermelon, mango, cantaloupe, strawberries, kumquat, orange and passion fruit – and four seasons tea.

The Mango Milkshake (\$6.80), made with fresh mango granules and milk whip, is another signature item and was Artea's top-selling drink during its opening weeks.

Another fruit tea is Princess Strawberry (\$7.20) comprising strawberries and banana smoothies, topped with wheat cream and sprinkles.

The Black Tea Latte (\$4.80) – made with premium Ceylon tea leaves and wheat cream and fruits – is among the recommended drinks.

Artea is also known for its souffles. The Original Souffle (\$7.80) is a freshly baked souffle topped with fresh milk wheat cream and is suitable for those who like their food less sweet.

The highly recommended Mango Souffle (\$8.80) is topped with fresh



mango. Other flavours include Tiramisu Souffle (\$8.50) and Strawberry Souffle (\$9.50).

For combos, try the Original Souffle and Mango Milkshake (\$11.80), Mango Souffle and Signature Fruit Tea (\$13.80), Strawberry Souffle and You Lan Latte (\$12.80), or Tiramisu Souffle and White Peach Oolong Latte (\$11.80).

Where: 01-100/101 VivoCity, 1 Harbourfront Walk
Open: 11am to 10pm daily
Info: Go to www.facebook.com/arteasg

LOBSTERS & ICE CREAM

Lobsters & Ice Cream, which opened in Chinatown just over a month ago, sources its fresh seafood from places such as Japan, the east coast of North America, Indonesia and the Philippines, and combines the seafood produce with its made-from-scratch artisanal ice cream flavours.

The eatery was inspired by modern fine dining and Nordic cuisine, where ice cream flavours are often served as part of a cold appetiser or as a contrast or accompaniment to a warm dish.

The made-to-order seafood rolls (crab \$9 to \$18, right, lobster \$14 to \$28, half-crab/half-lobster \$23) are created with 100g portions of seafood on an 18cm-long locally sourced oblong bread roll. The fluffy rolls are buttered with premium New Zealand butter and browned on a traditional cast iron pan. Each roll is layered with mayonnaise and lightly sautéed seafood before being finished with a variety of local and internationally inspired sauces.

Its Maine-style roll is served with either chilled or sautéed in butter seafood, on a bed of mayonnaise and finished with lemon juice, seafood jus and a spice mix. The chilli-crab sauce style tosses the sautéed seafood with housemade chilli crab

sauce, while the mentaiko style adds air-flown Japanese pollock roe that is charred with a kitchen torch and topped with tobiko.

Lobsters & Ice Cream serves both soft-serve (\$4.50) and regular hard ice cream (\$12 a tub) in a variety of housemade flavours, including matcha, purple potato and Milo.

Where: 191 New Bridge Road
Open: 11am to 11pm (Mondays to Thursdays), 11am to midnight (Fridays), 10.30am to midnight (Saturdays) and 10.30am to 11pm (Sundays)

Info: Call 9663-6632, e-mail ig620@hotmail.com or go to lobstersandicecream.business.site or www.facebook.com/lobstersandicecream

Opening a restaurant? Send the details to stlife@sph.com.sg



Swig

Beer and beyond

A new wave of craft beer bars focuses on first-time drinkers, providing spaces for conversations about beer and art



Anjali Raguraman

Singapore is now home to more than 20 craft beer bars, with a new wave opening in the last few months.

From the friendly, neighbourhood Orh Gao Taproom in Bukit Timah to the slick, minimalist Almost Famous Craft Beer Bar in City Hall to the laidback Bunkerbunker in the Bugis-Rochor area, this latest crop is big on making craft beer accessible to first-time drinkers.

The bars add on to the diverse scene here which has everything from longstanding microbreweries such as RedDot BrewHouse and Brewerkz, to hawker centre craft beer haunts like Smith Street Taps and 3rd Culture Brewing Co., to the grungy, cool joints with cult followings like Freehouse and Mikkeller Bar Singapore.

But along with providing the spectrum of styles available in craft beer with highly curated beer lists, these new bars are also going beyond what their predecessors have done by creating multi-purpose spaces. Here, people can have conversations about the beers and even other branches of craft, like art and design.

Mr Kenny Lee, 26, co-founder of Almost Famous Craft Beer Bar says: "I hope to utilise the space as a platform for emerging artists and entrepreneurs of all disciplines in Singapore to debut their designs and products."

"The clean aesthetic will serve as a blank slate to host openings and launches, while the movable furniture and adjustable lighting can accommodate events of all kinds."

Similarly, over at Bunkerbunker, which is surrounded by schools such as LaSalle College of the Arts and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, founder Keola Ho, 25, says: "There's so much art and design in this neighbourhood, so other than the beers, this space has also allowed me to create a mini hub for artists to showcase their work."

But building the craft beer scene is the main focus for all three players.

Mr Samuel Low, manager of Orh Gao Taproom: "More needs to be done to educate people on what craft beer is and how to taste and qualify it."

While the majority of his customers are in their 20s to 30s and "still quite new to craft beers", he takes comfort in the fact that they are aware of craft beer here.

The signs are encouraging. "They may not be sure about the different styles, like a saison or gose, but people are not hesitant to spend \$15 to \$17 for a pint... so it's definitely getting there," he adds.

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Orh Gao Taproom's manager Samuel Low wants to build a community of drinkers who appreciate craft beer together.
ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

Neighbourhood hangout with kampung vibe

ORH GAO TAPROOM

Start and end the day with a "toast" at this month-old joint.

From 7.30am to 6pm, the space is a Killiney Kopitiam franchise serving up kaya toast and other Singaporean breakfast staples. But at 4pm, the bar portion opens to start pouring out craft beer.

Called the Orh Gao Taproom – a nod to the Hokkien coffee-shop slang for stouts – the bar is located at Serene Centre in Bukit Timah, taking over the space formerly occupied by ice-cream shop Island Creamery.

While the majority of craft beer bars are located in the Central Business District or town area, manager Samuel Low, 30, sought to bring a similar experience to his neighbourhood.

"I wanted to build a neighbourhood watering hole, which is com-

fortable, warm and welcoming," says Mr Low.

Here, there are always 10 beers on tap, from light to dark beers, which Mr Low wants to keep accessible to entry-level drinkers.

"Seventy to 80 per cent of the beers I bring in are beginner-friendly, in terms of price and palate," he says. Beers on tap are priced from \$12 to \$17 a pint, with most kegs rotating weekly.

But there is also a selection of more "extraordinary" bottled beers for the connoisseurs and beer geeks, ranging from a pecan pie imperial stout to a blueberry muffin pale ale.

As part of his vision to bring a "kampung vibe" to the bar, there is also a large communal table in front of the bar, so that "people can build connections and drink good beer".

The unpretentious taproom already attracts regulars from the neighbourhood, along with tourists from the Botanic Gardens, which is located a stone's throw away.

Mr Low also believes in education about craft beer, as more drinkers get into it.

"Hopefully, I build a kampung spirit strong enough that every time one of the regulars returns from an overseas trip, he brings back bottles and we can do sharing sessions to taste new beers and learn about them."

Where: 01-03 Serene Centre, 10 Jalan Serene

Open: Tuesdays to Thursdays and Sundays, 4pm to 11pm; Fridays and Saturdays, 4pm to midnight. Closed on Mondays.

Info: www.facebook.com/orhgaotaproom



Bunkerbunker does not serve beer on tap, which allows founder Keola Ho to stock 100 to 120 labels of beer, cider and mead at one time.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE



The interior of Almost Famous Craft Beer Bar is influenced by co-founder Kenny Lee's fine art background and high-end fashion stores in Japan.
ST PHOTO: JEREMY KWAN

A bar, cafe and gallery rolled into one

BUNKERBUNKER

A mishmash of overturned crates, concrete slabs and tarpaulin form the seats, tables and roof in the outdoor area of Bunkerbunker, which opened in the Rochor-Bugis neighbourhood in September last year.

Here, there are no beers on tap. Instead, the beers, which average at around \$12 a pop, come in cans and bottles.

This allows founder Keola Ho to stock anywhere between a 100 to 120 labels of beer, cider and mead at any one time. There are new beers on tap every week.

"For craft beer, the assumption that kegs are always fresher is not true," says the 25-year-old, who used to work at bottle shop and bar, The Great Beer Experiment, as well

as design-centric non-profit organisation Participate in Design.

"Cans are always the best way to keep your beer super fresh because they eliminate light, the No. 1 thing that degrades the beer. They are also more environment-friendly and cost-efficient."

The beers and main bar area are housed in a repurposed container – formerly Danish craft beer joint Mikkeller, which has moved to Purvis Street.

The space is as much a craft beer bar and cafe, as it is an event space and micro gallery, showcasing artwork from artists in the neighbourhood, which is home to multiple arts schools.

Whether it is the beer on offer, the upcycled furniture or the art

work on display, Bunkerbunker is big on going local.

"We try to be local-forward so when you come in, the eye-level beers in the fridges are all Singaporean beers," says Mr Ho, who rattles off names such as Brewlander, Rye & Pint, Daryl's Urban Ales, That Singapore Beer Project and Lion City Meadery.

The rest of the range is made up mostly of sessionable beers (typically three to five per cent alcohol by volume), experimental beers and "a good selection of Belgian beers, which I feel is a must", says Mr Ho.

Where: Deck, 120A Prinsep Street
Open: Tuesdays to Sundays, 11am to midnight. Closed on Mondays.

Tel: 9182-1246

Info: www.bunkerbunker.sg

ALMOST FAMOUS CRAFT BEER BAR

At first glance through the fish tank-like glass windows, the stark, grey and white interior of the month-old Almost Famous in Chijmes may seem cold and unwelcoming.

But every design choice, heavily influenced by co-founder Kenny Lee's fine art background and high-end fashion stores in Japan, is meant to put the beer, and the patrons themselves, front and centre.

"Minimalism is the core principle in every aspect of our concept, to remove all distractions and focus on the subjects within, whether it's the patrons or the beers," says Mr Lee, 26.

Unlike most beer bars which have taps and accompanying labels that indicate what beer is on tap, the 16 taps that line the bar back are unmarked.

"This is so that the customer won't have to stress out when

choosing a beer with the bartender looking at him," he says.

"It is also to make the consumer enjoy the environment and then decide what mood and flavours he wants." The beer list comes on a menu that customers can take their time to peruse.

Craft beer pints are priced at \$14, premium craft pints are \$16 and there is also a \$10-a-glass Czech pilsner for "the person who wants to transition from commercial to craft beers".

"We try our best to prioritise Asian craft breweries, like Brewlander from Singapore, Pasteur Street Brewing from Vietnam and Young Master Ales from Hong Kong, but we also have popular craft labels like Australia's Pirate Life and New Zealand's Garage Project," he says.

The bar also wants its patrons to be able to try new and upcoming beers.

"Ultimately, we also want to have a

good balance, in terms of taste profiles, from the lighter, fruitier ones to heavier beers full of hoppy flavours."

There are plans to one day have all taps pouring Singapore beer.

But Almost Famous does not want to stop at just being a craft beer bar. Given the blank canvas its space is, it is also looking to be a platform for upcoming designers and artists and "curating people who are good at their craft", hence the name "almost famous".

"We hope to expand the Almost Famous concept into many other aspects, curating a holistic retail and lifestyle experience for anything ranging from beer to coffee to fashion," he adds.

Where: 01-06 Chijmes, 30 Victoria Street
Open: 3pm to midnight, daily

Info: almostfamous.sg or www.facebook.com/almostfamoussg

Restaurant Review



The 72-hour US Short Ribs Rendang (left) and Chargrilled "Bak Kut Teh" Pork Chop (right). PHOTOS: THE CAPITOL KEMPINSKI HOTEL SINGAPORE



Creative hits and misses

Asian dishes are done with a twist at chef Alvin Leung's 15 Stamford, but not all are winners



Wong Ah Yoke
Food Critic

While traditions have their place in the kitchen, I am all for innovation too. How else do new dishes get created if one does not try to break away from the same old, same old?

But being innovative is not to be gimmicky, though there is sometimes a very fine line between the two.

You find examples of both at 15 Stamford by Alvin Leung, the two-week-old restaurant at The Capitol Kempinski Hotel Singapore.

The chef, who owns the three-Michelin-starred Bo Innovation in Hong Kong, lends his name to the restaurant and created the menu of Asian dishes done with a twist.

But as with most celebrity restaurants, the chef is hardly in town and the person running the day-to-day operations is the hotel's executive sous chef Andy Soon, who used to work at Labyrinth.

Leung has some good ideas and the Chargrilled "Bak Kut Teh" Pork Chop (\$38) is one of them.

I am a bit apprehensive at first because the herbs for Malaysian-style bak kut teh – which I assume, correctly, would be what is used here – can be rather overpowering.

But the way they are used here, as a rub for the pork chop, is so balanced that you get the bak kut teh flavour straightforward, yet also taste the meat.

It comes with a small pitcher of angelica BBQ sauce on the side, but the herb, called dang gui in Chinese, has a strong medicinal taste and overpowers the bak kut teh aroma. So I'd say skip it.

The meat comes with two slabs of compressed watermelon brushed with angelica syrup, but here, the herb is more subtle and the sweet

and juicy fruit provides a good intermezzo for the pork.

The other meat dish I order, 72-hour US Short Ribs Rendang (\$68), is good too. The beef has enough fat to give it a melt-in-the-mouth sensation, but is not so tender that it falls apart. The rendang sauce is delicious and fragrant, but not too spicy.

That is good because the dish does not come with rice or any other carbohydrate. Instead, the side is a generous serving of pickled purple cabbage that reminds me of sauerkraut except for its colour.

At \$68, it seems pricey, but the serving is enough for two persons. Get the pork chop to share, too, and its \$38 price tag will bring down the average bill.

If you need carbs, look under the Noodles & Rice section of the menu.

I order the Laksa (\$32), which the server proudly points out has a stock made with fresh prawns. It is tasty, but with that spicy broth, I have to admit that it would take more sensitive taste buds than mine to appreciate that fact.

What stand out instead are the quail eggs, which have a soft yolk that is so much more yummy than when it gets hard-boiled.

The dish is nice, but I will not order it again because the small amount of rice noodles and the meagre toppings of fishcake strips, beancurd puff and two grilled medium-sized prawns are not enough to justify the price. Plus, there are no cockles in it.

What comes across as gimmicky is Three-style Corn Salad (\$18) with tomatoes and cucumber.

The grilled corn kernels and baby corn are fine, but sprinkling pop-



corn over the salad is such a bad idea. The unsweetened popcorn is not crispy, so it does not do anything to the dish texture-wise, and its blandness does not improve the flavour either.

The salad is tossed in a vinaigrette made with Pat Chun sweetened vinegar, a premium brand from Hong Kong. It has a pleasant mild flavour, but is not enough to save the dish.

The dessert I order, the Gula Melaka Creme Brulee (\$14), is delicious on its own, but is spoilt by a scoop of mojito sorbet that is overly acidic and tastes more of lime than mojito. Two crispy wafers of cherry meringue propped against the sorbet, however, go perfectly well with the creme brulee.

What I love most about 15 Stamford is how beautiful the restaurant is.

It is a huge space in what used to be the ground floor of the MPH bookstore in Stamford Road and the luxe look of brass, leather and dark wood is perfect for the colonial building. Tables are spaced a good distance apart and the dining area comes with different levels and corners that create cosy nooks.

It is so comfortable, I find myself lingering over lunch. Then I check the time and realise that it is way past the restaurant's 3pm closing hour, and I should get out before I try the patience of the affable staff.

ahyoke@sph.com.sg

• Follow Wong Ah Yoke on Instagram @wongahyoke

• The Sunday Times paid for its meals at the eateries reviewed here.

15 STAMFORD BY ALVIN LEUNG

The Capitol Kempinski Hotel Singapore, 15 Stamford Road, tel: 6715-6871; open: noon to 3pm, 6 to 10.30pm daily

Food: ★★★★☆

Service: ★★★★☆

Ambience: ★★★★☆

Price: Budget from \$80 a person, more if you order beef or seafood

Cheap & Good

Tasty pork bun that looks cute too



Yip Wai Yee

Here is a breakfast option perfect for Instagrammers – a pork patty sandwiched in a bun that is shaped to look like a chubby face of a pig.

And, no, the gimmick was not created for the upcoming Chinese New Year, which will celebrate the Year of the Pig.

Apparently, the original pork bun (\$3.50) at Seng Huat Coffee House has been a favourite with residents

in the Hougang neighbourhood for years.

I saw the bun on a friend's Facebook page and I confess that I went to seek it out for myself only because of the cute factor.

It turns out that it tastes good too, as I discover on a recent trip to the bustling coffee shop. It is located next to Hougang Mall, so foot traffic is heavy.

I order the sandwich in a set (\$5), which includes two soft-boiled eggs and a cup of hot coffee or tea.

I lift the pig's face bun and see a pork patty, a slice of cheese and a very generous amount of mayonnaise and sweet chilli sauce.

Do not tell me how many calories there are in this sandwich.

I take a large bite – the patty is succulent, even if it is on the thin side.

When my friend had her pork bun months ago, the patty was seasoned with black pepper, but mine is doused in a slightly sweet, teriyaki-style marinade. Perhaps the stall changes the recipe every now and then.

The bun is also warm and fresh, but I would have preferred it to be toasted for a few minutes longer until it gets a crisp shell, like the ones you find in Macau.

Even though the sandwich is not very big – it is about the size of my fist – I am stuffed.

After I shared a photo of it in an Instagram story, I was not surprised when several friends sent me messages to ask me about it. Looks like they are just as easily sold as I am.

yipwy@sph.com.sg



SENG HUAT COFFEE HOUSE (HOUGANG)
01-206, Block 811 Hougang Central; open: 5am to 11pm daily

Rating: ★★★★☆

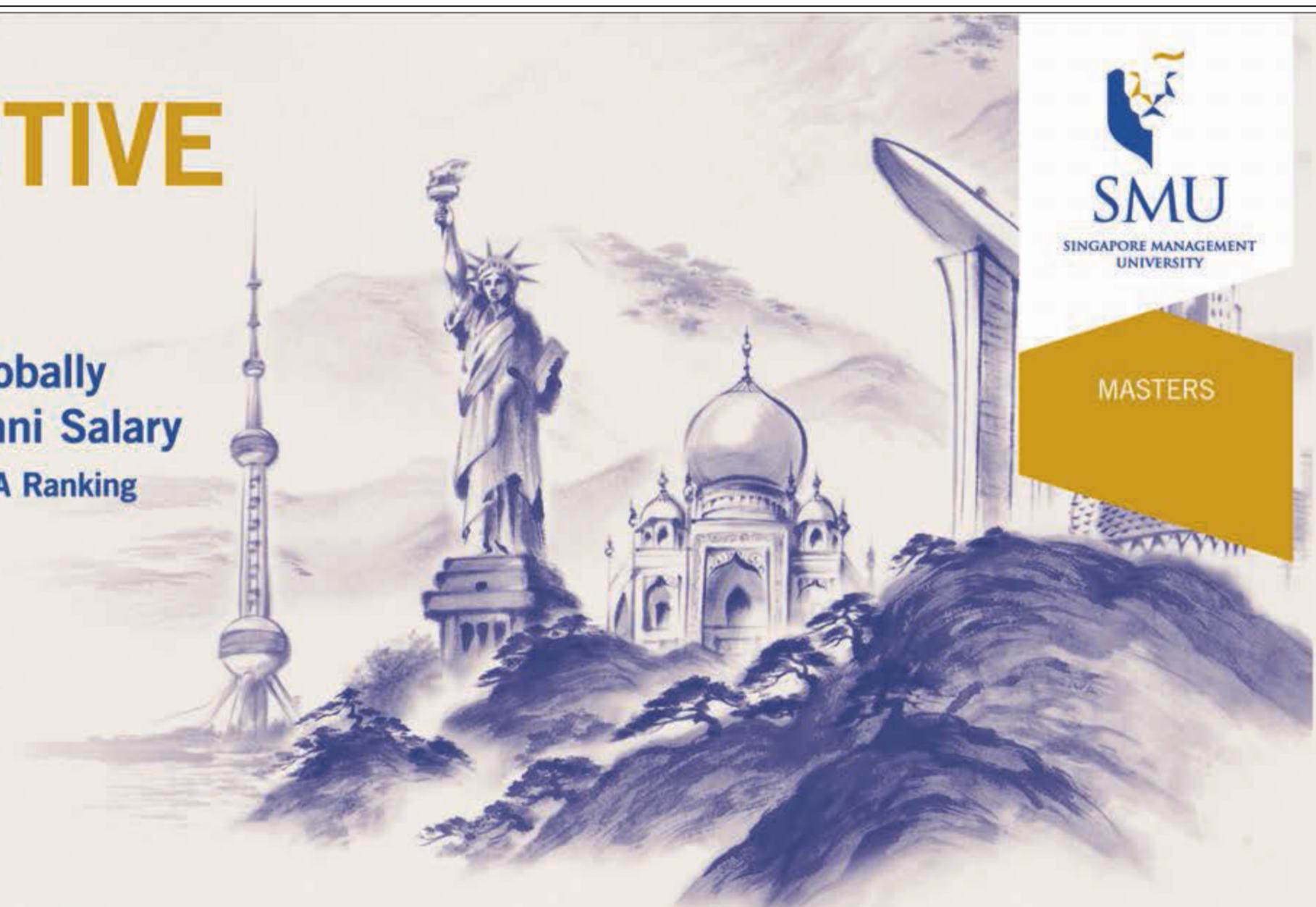
POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I



GRAPHIC: ISTOCK

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Date : 15 January 2019, Tuesday

Time : 7pm

Venue : Singapore Management University, Administration Building
81 Victoria Street Singapore 188065
Level 5, Executive Seminar Room 5-1

Reserve your place via <https://smu.sg/emba1501>

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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I

Beyond the degree

Baffled by postgraduate options?
Associate Professor Themin Suwardy,
the dean of Postgraduate Professional
Programmes at SMU, offers tips for those
planning further studies



PHOTO: TED CHEN

BY MICHELLE CHIN

Whether you are keen to reskill or upskill yourself, be astute when selecting a postgraduate course.

A postgraduate qualification must fit into your long-term plans — whether the aim is to switch career fields or to gain deeper expertise and domain knowledge to advance in your current field.

Associate Professor Themin Suwardy, the dean of Postgraduate Professional Programmes at Singapore Management University (SMU), recommends finding out about different pedagogies, diverse programme-specific features and competitive advantages such as partnerships, accreditations, overseas and practical stints, as well as career service components.

He says: "Different programmes may attract different profiles of candidates. The more technical programmes, such as accounting, finance or information technology, tend to attract those who want to gain specific skillsets in order to enter or advance in the discipline."

"Programmes such as the Master of Business Administration (MBA) or Master of Science in Management are broader and have a wider-ranging student profile, including aspiring entrepreneurs, career switchers and those seeking well-grounded business and management knowledge as they scale the corporate ladder."

New developments

SMU has over 20 postgraduate professional programmes, from general management programmes (such as MBAs) to specialised master's programmes in accounting, analytics, finance, law and others.

In 2018, SMU offered new Master of Science in Accounting (Data and Analytics), and a revamped Master of Science in Economics (MSE) with tracks in applied economics, econometrics and quantitative economics.

This year, look forward to the Judicial Studies track under its Master of Laws (LLM) programme, as well as full-time versions of the Master of Science in Innovation (MI), Master of Science in Communication Management (MCM) and Master of Human Capital Leadership (MHCL).

Fruitful collaboration

This year, there will also be a new digital learning platform launched to support selected existing programmes.

The Future of Management Education Alliance — comprising Imperial College Business School, ESMT Berlin, BI Norwegian Business School, Lee Kong Chian School of Business (LKCSB) at Singapore Management University, EDHEC Business School and Ivey Business School — is offering the platform.

Associate Professor Suwardy says: "This platform combines faculty expertise with cutting-edge technology to meet growing demand from students and executives for a more flexible, bespoke and globally accessible study experience."

"The alliance will enable partner schools to enhance the student experience through face-to-face, experiential and online learning methods."



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NUS Business School Postgraduate Fair, Singapore

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Executive MBA Sessions

14:30 - 15:30 UCLA - NUS Executive MBA Information Session

15:30 - 16:30 The NUS Executive MBA Information Session

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Master of Science (MSc) Programme Sessions

13:30 - 14:15 MSc in Management & CEMS MIM Information Session

14:15 - 15:00 MSc in Finance Information Session

13:30 - 14:30 Executive MSc in Investments & Portfolio Risk Management (EMIR) Information Session & Introductory Class: Quantitative Portfolio Management from a Factor Investing Perspective

14:30 - 15:30 MSc in Business Analytics Information Session

16:00 - 17:00 MSc in Marketing Analytics and Insights Information Session

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- Singapore Management University
- Full-time: One year
- Part-time: Two years



PHOTO: TED CHEN

The joy of learning

Assistant Professor Michelle Wang enjoys every step in paving her career path in academic

BY CHEN JINYAO

Ask Dr Michelle Wang, 33, what she enjoys about life as an academic and her replies reflect her undeniable passion for her job.

The assistant professor, who teaches English at the School of Humanities at the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), says: "It's the little things — meeting like-minded people at conferences who continue to help you perceive the familiar in new ways and invigorate the way you think about issues or books.

"It's those moments in the classroom when students go, 'Oh, I never saw it that way!'

"It's also when you've been wrestling to put a particular idea into words, leading to that moment when it clicks — it's pretty incredible."

Prof Wang's journey towards academia started when she was an undergraduate reading Communication Studies at NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information. She had taken a minor in English, during which, her teacher, Professor Neil Murphy, encouraged her to apply for NTU's Master of Arts in English.

Her decision to pursue the MA was the point at which she began to seriously consider a career in academia.

However, since her undergraduate training was in a different discipline, she was not absolutely certain she had what it took to embark on a doctorate in English, given that the doctoral degree "demands an extraordinary commitment in terms of time, intellectual rigour and emotional grit, among other things".

She says: "What I enjoyed about doing the MA was really just the freedom, time and space to read and think. And I was in an environment that nurtured my love of literature, with teachers who

taught me to see texts in new ways, in a process that was no longer dominantly grades-driven."

Pursuing the MA gave Prof Wang an understanding of what being an academic entailed.

She explains: "The teaching. The flexibility to read and think about texts of my choice. And also, the learning opportunities my professors offered by employing fellow graduate students and I as research assistants to copy-edit and proof-read their books — such opportunities and experiences helped shed light on what being an academic involves.

"So it was a process that helped shaped the goal of becoming an academic as much as it helped me to advance toward it."

"Having teachers who believed in me was absolutely critical."

The joy of pursuing the MA in contemporary fiction also inspired her to complete a PhD at The Ohio State University in the United States. She also did an NTU HASS (Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences) International Postdoctoral Fellowship at Queen Mary University of London in Britain. She is now back at NTU and has just taught a graduate seminar in the history of literary theory.

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH (SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES)

- College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University
- Full-time: Minimum one year and maximum three years
- Part-time: Minimum one year and maximum four years

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Date : 16 January 2019, Wednesday

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Venue : Singapore Management University
Lee Kong Chian School of Business
Level 3, Seminar Room 3.1
50 Stamford Road Singapore 178899

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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I

Deeper learning to empower others

SMU's Master of Science in Wealth Management arms executive director Sylvia Lim with deeper knowledge on succession planning

BY RACHEL TAN

It started with the global financial crisis in 2008.

The event awakened in Ms Sylvia Lim a desire to redefine herself and her skillsets. She thought about how she should play her part as a banking professional to improve industry standards, to conduct her business differently and serve her clients better.

She felt that she needed to not only keep up to date with the latest financial market developments, but also refine her knowledge to offer more holistic solutions to her clients.

Having previously earned her Bachelor of Business Administration in 1993 and a Masters of Arts in Southeast Asian Studies in 1997 from National University of Singapore, the avid learner decided at the end of 2008 that she should not miss out on the opportunity to pursue a specialised programme tailored to her profession despite completing her studies more than a decade ago.

But with her second child born months before the global financial crisis, it was only in 2011 that she was able to put her thoughts into action.

With the support of her previous employer who sponsored her postgraduate endeavours, the Master of Science in Wealth Management at Singapore Management University's Lee Kong Chian School of Business was a natural choice as the region's leading wealth management programme.

Currently an executive director with UBS, wealth management has been Ms Lim's passion for over 20 years.

Through the course, with its diverse net-

work and students from different countries, nationalities and backgrounds, she met coursemates who became her good friends, colleagues and even clients.

The programme, designed with industry partners and eminent universities in Switzerland and the US, allowed Ms Lim and her peers to interact with established international practitioners and academics.

She fondly recalls her exposure to the very rigorous Swiss approach to succession planning. This, together with her own experience of completing an extensive succession plan for a beloved client when he became terminally ill, inspired her to write a paper on the topic in fulfilment of her coursework that eventually won a university book prize.

Ms Lim graduated from the course in 2012 and now manages a team of private bankers who serve high net worth clients.

She credits the programme with giving her fresh perspectives on wealth management on a global scale.

The executive director finds great satisfaction in her role as what she and her team does impacts the well-being of their clients and families.

This year, she has also been involved in a work initiative empowering women in financial literacy.

"I have been blessed by many great women in my life, both professionally and personally. Their well-being is close to my heart," she says.

"Empowering those who need more help in achieving financial literacy or wish to take charge of their finances but do not know how or where to begin is something I would like to do more."



MASTER OF SCIENCE IN WEALTH MANAGEMENT

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PHOTO: TED CHEN



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NTUC Centre Building (Level 9), Room 902
1 Marina Boulevard, Singapore 018989

For registration and course details, visit:
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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I

Braving the first step



PHOTO: TED CHEN

Mr Daniel Wong took the MITHM-MBA at JCU to be equipped with skills related to innovation and entrepreneurship to set up a restaurant business

BY CHEN JINYAO

Previously an interior designer, Mr Daniel Wong, 28, made the unlikely switch to be a restaurateur. After he obtained his Master of International Tourism and Hospitality Management — Master of Business Administration (MITHM-MBA), Mr Wong opened The Obelisk in August last year, a restaurant in Tanjong Pagar serving Singapore-European cuisine and unique cocktails.

When he enrolled in the master's degree programme at James Cook University Singapore, he had wanted to start a business and signed up for the university's MBA to learn business strategies. But he had no particular industry in mind then.

Things changed when he met Dr Jenny Panchal in the MBA elective module Hospitality And Gastronomy. She saw his interest in the area and encouraged him to switch from the MBA to the MITHM-MBA.

There were some overlaps in the modules between the two programmes, so Mr Wong could make the switch comfortably.

Mr Wong got the idea to open The Obelisk while he was doing the MITHM-MBA module Innovation And Entrepreneurship, which required students to draw up a business plan.

He came up with the concept for his restaurant from discussions with his lecturer Adrian Bradshaw.

"Dr Bradshaw was constantly helping to refine my ideas and guiding me," says Mr Wong.

Another lecturer, Dr K. Thirumaran, who also teaches MITHM-MBA modules, nudged Mr Wong towards the food and beverage industry too.

Mr Wong says: "Among many other skills he taught us, what I learnt from Dr Thiru was to take that first step and never be afraid of trying."

The comprehensive modules were also useful. For example, the course materials from the module Marketing And Customer Engagement guided Mr Wong in the handling of the restaurant's marketing strategies.

Mr Wong credits his family for being supportive, especially his mother and wife. "I wouldn't have opened the restaurant had it not been for their encouragement and belief in me," he says.

Master of International Tourism and Hospitality Management — Master of Business Administration

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PHOTO: WILLIAM HARTONO

Attaining the NUS MBA gave Go-Jek Bandung's district head William Hartono a competitive advantage

A smoother ride to success

BY MARIANNE TAN

At 27, Mr William Hartono already has an impressive career, having worked at companies such as management consulting firm Boston Consulting Group and oilfield services company Schlumberger.

In 2017, Mr Hartono — then the head of e-commerce and field marketing at an Indonesian e-commerce start-up — pursued the Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Among other skill sets, he wanted to sharpen his business acumen and learn from his peers from different countries.

"Singapore is the tech hub of Southeast Asia, and NUS is well-recognised in the tech and start-up fields," he says.

During his 17-month full-time course, he became proficient in general management knowledge, which helped him excel in multiple job functions, especially in the high-growth tech start-up sectors.

The Entrepreneurship Study Mission — Silicon Valley, USA module gave him

the opportunity to visit Silicon Valley to better understand the international entrepreneurial scene. He also had the chance to study under the tutelage of Professor Virginia Cha, a well-respected educator and influential figure in Singapore's entrepreneur ecosystem.

Shortly after he obtained his MBA, he was headhunted to join Go-Jek. He was tasked to help streamline the recruitment process at the company, despite not having any human resource experience.

With the know-how obtained during his MBA studies, he managed to identify and solve a bottleneck issue and helped the company increase its manpower recruitment significantly.

For his efforts, Mr Hartono was promoted after his three-month probation. Now as a district head at Go-Jek's Bandung office, the largest of the brand's business in Indonesia after Jakarta, he deals with all facets of the business — from marketing and operations to external affairs. He believes his NUS MBA has helped him to attain higher levels of knowledge and soft skills to solve business problems.

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- Strong alumni network across more than 20 countries
- Well connected to the wealth management industry: benefit from internships and career placements
- Scholarship options for Singaporeans and international students

Learn more about the SMU MWM

Date : 15 January 2019, Tuesday

Time : 7pm - 9pm

Venue : Singapore Management University

Lee Kong Chian School of Business, Level 3, Seminar Room 3-1

50 Stamford Road, Singapore 178899

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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I

PHOTO:
TED CHEN

SMU's EMBA draws high-flyer Leonora Lim who wants to learn new ways of doing business

BY NUR SYAHIDAH ZAINAL

For Ms Leonora Lim, 44, getting a promotion at work is not an indication of having "made it"; rather, it signalled a need for her to continue picking up new skills.

Even with more than two decades of experience, she still finds it essential to go back to school to refresh her knowledge and get updated on new ways of doing business.

For example, the logistics world is changing rapidly due to the evolution of technology, with various disruptions and new modes of trade and operations such as digitalisation, market platforms and sharing economies.

To that end, the vice-president for life sciences and healthcare in Asia Pacific at DHL Customer Solutions & Innovation is taking on the Executive MBA (EMBA) programme offered by Singapore Management University (SMU).

She chose the SMU EMBA because of the opportunity to study at three other world-class universities, including the Indian School of Business, Peking University, and The Wharton School, as part of her programme.

Relevant to work

The course on Human Capital Management at Wharton particularly stood out as it coincided with organisational restructuring that her company was undergoing.

Ms Lim says: "The timing of both the course and the announcement made the topics on managing human capital in the company, such as motivation and talent management, exceptionally relevant to me."

The friendly and relaxed atmosphere of the information session was also a huge draw for her.

She says: "I vividly remember the camaraderie displayed by members of the previous batch when sharing their learning experience."

"Since the class is going to spend a good amount of time together, what better than to have a friendly and collaborative environment? So far, my classmates in SMU have been awesome."

Diverse viewpoints

Ms Lim also appreciates having a diverse mix of student profiles in her classroom, as it is "a miniature reflection of the world out there, where we often work with people from different nationalities, backgrounds and culture," she says.

"Besides getting to know more people, you learn to be even more open and adaptive in interacting with people as you get to hear different approaches to business issues."

She also enjoys interacting with the friendly and accessible lecturers as they challenge the students' thinking, share real-life examples and create opportunities for them to exchange different viewpoints.

"The lecturers have been top notch in how they teach and engage us in classes, which are very interactive and intellectually stimulating," she adds.

The school's learning resources and facilities, such as the comfortable, theatre-styled classrooms and the library, also creates a conducive environment for learning.

She explains: "The library has meeting rooms with screen projection, which makes it very conducive for us to hold group meetings there. The school even provides parking passes when we attend the segments."

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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I

Stepping up

An MBA from SMU equips Mr Jatutana Pitakpong with much-needed hands-on business experience

BY BRYANT CHAN

He thought his Bachelor of Business Administration from Assumption University in Thailand would suffice.

But after he started working at Google's Business Development and Client Acquisition, 30-year-old Jatutana Pitakpong realised that while he had the theoretical knowledge, he could not apply it effectively in his daily work.

That's when he realised that a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Singapore Management University would fill that gap.

The prospect of an MBA began to look far more enticing after a promotion, with his new role requiring him to interact constantly with C-level executives and senior stakeholders — making him painfully aware of the gap in his practical experience.

"I felt that it was time to sharpen my tool kit by gaining real-life experience and learn from other professionals who're at the same stage of their careers," he says.

But Mr Pitakpong didn't just want the paper qualification, he wanted a postgraduate education where he would be able to engage intellectually with his classmates.

So he visited several schools to observe their MBA lectures and seminars.

At SMU, the class format and teaching method at Lee Kong Chian School of Business stood out.

"The lecturers were using real case studies to illustrate business theories and the students were actively participating," says Mr Pitakpong.

Doing the course part-time turned out to be tricky as he had to juggle work and studies, and his job requires him to travel regularly.

In fact, most of his assignments had to be completed on the plane.

"I gained invaluable experience at SMU," he says. "After participating in class discussions, listening to guest speakers and analysing business case studies, I have a better understanding of how to apply business frameworks to real-life situations. I am also more confident now when dealing with business partners and C-suite clients."

In his 18 months at SMU, Mr Pitakpong won both the Global Awareness Scholarship and the Community Impact Scholarship, took part in an exchange programme with IE Business School in Spain, and for one of his classes, even helped to conceptualise a subscription-based product to help women cope with the stresses of their menstrual cycle.

Now he's inspired to do even more.

Mr Pitakpong plans to eventually return to Bangkok to start his own business, and also become a part-time lecturer at a Thai university.

"I believe the education system in Thailand needs to evolve from memory-based to experiential learning, and change to something more in line with what is offered by the Lee Kong Chian curriculum," he says. "I hope to benefit the students in Thailand with my academic and professional experience in Singapore."



PHOTO: TED CHEN



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Graduate programmes: www.cohass.ntu.edu.sg
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■ Singapore Management University, Lee Kong Chian School of Business
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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I

Maximising potential

Dr Luu The Loi's NUS PhD in computer science motivated him to kickstart his own company



PHOTO: LUU THE LOI

It takes a special type of motivation to complete a PhD while managing a company, and Dr Luu The Loi has it.

The 27-year-old completed his PhD in computer science in 2017 at the National University of Singapore (NUS) School of Computing, under the President's Graduate Fellowship.

Prior to this, he graduated as the salutatorian from the Vietnam National University with a degree in computer science.

Dr Luu is also the chief executive officer and co-founder of Kyber Network, a decentralised exchange that is housed on blockchain.

In his last semester, he completed his PhD part-time so he could start his company and focus on growing it.

Dr Luu shares his views on what drives him:

How did you first become interested in computer science?

I have been interested in programming, particularly algorithms, data structure and competitive programming since high school.

Back in the early 2000s, computer programming was something extremely new for a high school student in Vietnam, and hence I was interested in learning about it despite

not knowing its potential.

What made you pursue a PhD?

Before completing my undergraduate studies, I had a chance to attend a short research internship at NUS in my third year at college and I totally loved the research environment at a top university.

As I found myself getting more involved in the cryptocurrency research and developer community, I decided to pursue PhD studies to spend more time working with other researchers and developers in the industry.

What plans do you have for the future?

Currently, I am fully focused on growing the decentralised ecosystem with Kyber Network and increasing adoption of our protocol.

Together with my team, I want to further enable decentralised payments and finance, and help create a world where any token is usable anywhere.

PhD in Computer Science

- National University of Singapore, School of Computing
- Full-time: Typically five years

This is regardless of the type of societal

SUTD's new Master of Innovation by Design (IbD) promotes design thinking across various fields of knowledge



PHOTO: TED CHEN

Cultivating a design-centric mindset

This year, Singapore University of Technology & Design (SUTD) is launching the Master of Innovation by Design (IbD) — a new professional master's programme that integrates design innovation with multiple disciplines.

This course applies design across the disciplines of engineering, innovation, business, entrepreneurship, management and industrial design. Apply by March if you want to join the first intake in September.

Students will be equipped to be leaders of global product-service-systems who can work effectively and efficiently across the value chain.

Ms Delane Foo, an industrial designer at SUTD-MIT International Design Centre and a design innovation facilitator at SUTD Academy, shares her thoughts:

What is design innovation and its main takeaways?

Design thinking and innovation are where the perspective-taking mindset and key design tools facilitate, extract and integrate valuable insights into the architecting of sustainable products, services and systems.

These innovations employ rethinking and using of existing materials to create products that are environmentally sustainable.

Through this programme, students will look at businesses, governments and lived experience differently.

They may also co-create projects with end-users towards a more sustainable and better world by design.

Master of Innovation by Design

- Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD)
- Full-time: One to two years
- Part-time: Two to three years



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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I



PHOTO: TED CHEN

The Singapore Digital (SG:D) Scholarship supports a range of infocomm media (ICM) areas of study at the Polytechnic, Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels, which empowers you to chart your own career path in an ICM job role in any organisation or industry.

finance or business administration.

Now working at sovereign wealth fund GIC as an associate under the business partnership and solutions-global trading unit team, Mr Ng shares a little of what the experience was like:

What inspired you to pursue the MSSD offered by SUTD?

I was an undergraduate student at SUTD but my bachelor's degree had been focused on artificial intelligence.

I wanted to explore and gain expertise in an area of computer science that was relatively new to me.

The master's programme touched on what I was interested in — blockchain technology which is fundamentally based on the Merkle tree data structure. The Merkle tree data structure is also applicable to cyber security.

Moreover, the master's programme also covered foundations in cryptography such as hashing algorithms.

What modules or lessons in particular did you find compelling?

The domain of cyber security is large. My interests are mainly in systems security and advanced secure software engineering principles.

I have taken courses relating to the fundamentals of blockchain technology, like the Merkle tree data structure and how it can be applied as an alternative to the current standard of certificate authentication.

These modules are also relevant when designing complex technological trading systems within the financial sector.

Why do you find it necessary to pursue further studies?

Firstly, graduate courses dive deeper into the field one is studying. It provides a specialised set of domain knowledge that an undergraduate level does not.

For careers such as mine, having an in-depth quantitative degree allows me to understand other quantitative concepts with greater ease. It also allows me to apply what I have learnt in college at work.

Pursue lifelong education

Mr Darren Ng, who was awarded the NCPS (now known as SG:Digital Scholarship), believes in continuous learning

Most people stop after one postgraduate degree. Not Mr Darren Ng, who was awarded the National Cybersecurity Postgraduate Scholarship (NCPS), which is now part of the Singapore Digital (SG:D) Scholarship offered by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), to do a Master of Science in Security by Design (MSSD) at the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD).

The 27-year-old completed his post-graduate study last year, and enjoyed the course so much he plans to take on another master's degree in either mathematical

finance or business administration.

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PHOTO: TED CHEN

MASTER OF SCIENCE (REAL ESTATE)

- National University of Singapore
- Full-time: One year
- Part-time: One-and-a-half to two years

In the REITs and business trusts space, I work closely with our firm's real estate, banking and tax practices to assist our REITs clients with the setting up, structuring, financing and capital markets funding of REITs.

Why did you choose to further your studies?

As a corporate finance lawyer specialising in IPOs and listings of companies and REITs, I wanted to relate closer to my REITs clients and gain further insights in their decision-making process. Finding out that some of my clients were also graduates from this programme reinforced my decision.

What did you like about the master's programme?

I have since realised that real estate is indeed a "brick and mortar" industry as a lot of learning is gained in the field. In this respect, I found the curriculum to be an optimal blend of academic theory and hands-on project experience.

The school regularly organises site visits and invites industry professionals and esteemed alumni to share their work experience.

We also worked on projects based on live case studies, and in 2014, as part of the annual study trip, we flew to Da Nang in Vietnam where we were introduced to foreign property developers and visited development sites.

Through the programme, I've met coursemates who are property developers, valuers, architects, surveyors, asset managers, fund managers and bankers.

Virtually every stage of the life cycle of a property — from brownfield to real estate funds, asset investment and management — is represented in the class demographic. Today, I continue to act for and advise fellow alumni in IPO and M&A transactions.

Last year, we completed the listing of Sasseur REIT, the largest IPO in Singapore for 2018.

This programme has opened up new doors for me as a lawyer. By giving back to the school's bursary fund, I hope that others would be able to benefit from the opportunities I had.

Closing the gap

Having a master's degree in real estate helps Lawyer Wong Ee Kean relate to her clients better

How does postgraduate study help a lawyer who has been in practice for some time?

Ms Wong Ee Kean, 34, a partner at law firm WongPartnership, graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS) with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) in 2007. After working for a few years, she decided to pursue a part-time Master of Science (Real Estate) at NUS from 2013 to 2015.

She tells us what the programme was like and what she enjoyed about it:

What does your work entail?

My areas of practice include real estate investment trusts (REITs), business trusts, initial public offerings, listings as well as secondary offerings.

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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I



PHOTO: TED CHEN

A global perspective

At ESSEC Business School, it's all about giving the right type of exposure to students

BY MARIANNE TAN

Increasing numbers of students from the Asia-Pacific region are seeking out further education from international business schools, like top-ranking institution ESSEC Business School.

This was an observation made by Professor Aarti Ramaswami, 38, the Deputy Dean of ESSEC Asia-Pacific and the Academic Director of the ESSEC Global MBA Program in France and Singapore.

Currently, the school has over 580 students of many different nationalities enrolled in its programmes at the ESSEC Asia-Pacific campus in Singapore in the current academic year.

One of the reasons for its popularity is its focus on offering exposure — exposure to "peers, faculty members and corporate partners representing diverse cultures, industries and expertise".

"Our programmes encourage students to go above and beyond the pursuit of academic excellence and what is typically taught in classrooms," Professor Ramaswami explains.

"As classes are designed to be more intimate, students can find themselves working closely with distinguished professors and fellow students, allowing them to further develop interpersonal and team-working skills, as well as critical-thinking capabilities."

This helps foster stronger global perspectives, and at the same time, is a good opportunity for students to network. It is an experience that Professor Ramaswami describes as "truly international, diverse and culturally enriching".

Additionally, ESSEC's academic and programme directors also meet with industry leaders regularly to vet their learning processes and get industry insights.

These are then used to craft a curriculum that helps students build competencies to meet future business challenges, be it in strategy and digital transformation, new market entry, product innovation or sustainability.

"This ability to adapt will be a lifelong career skill and competitive advantage for [students], as the current business landscape demands professionals to be nimbler than ever," she says.

Thanks to these initiatives, ESSEC was ranked eighth in the Financial Times' European Business School Rankings 2018, and has over 50,000 alumni around the world.

Professor Ramaswami says: "We want to help students discover their passions and hidden talents by working through challenges. This develops valuable skills needed to not only apply knowledge, but also to creatively adapt various solutions to new situations."

ESSEC GLOBAL MBA

■ ESSEC Business School

■ Full-time: 12 months

Redesigning learning experiences

The redesigned MTech programmes at NUS-ISS aim to empower students to meet the industry's demands of skilled professionals

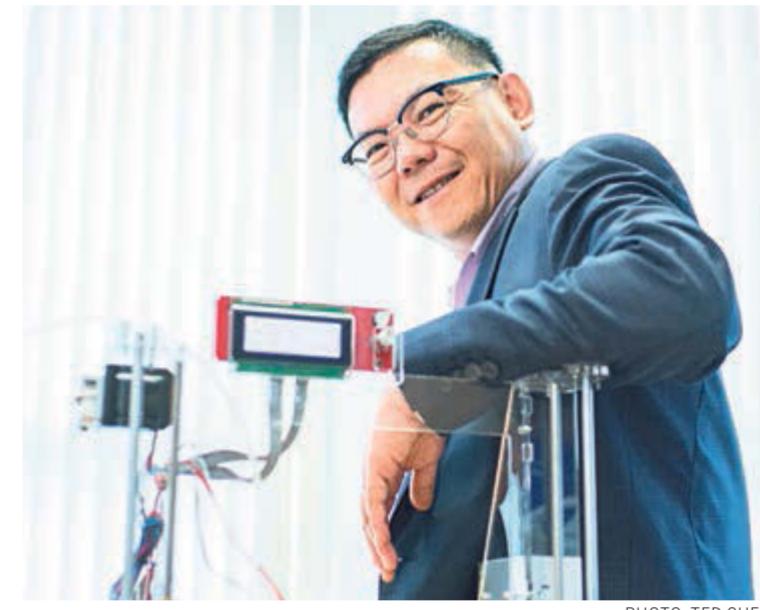


PHOTO: TED CHEN

At the Institute of Systems Science at the National University of Singapore (NUS-ISS), successful applicants can pick up advanced skills in data science, artificial intelligence, smart software development and more.

The programmes are offered to full-time and part-time students to be completed over one year and two years respectively. Successful applicants can also undertake the programmes via a "stackable" format which means accumulatively acquiring credit bearing modular courses leading up to a graduate certificate or an MTech degree.

MTech programmes

Regardless of the format of study, the MTech degree will

be conferred upon completion of required fundamental and specialist graduate certificates, capstone project and completing all necessary requirements pertaining to their respective degrees.

The capstone project is designed to develop the students' capabilities, as they are expected to demonstrate practical application of their skills, and work on real-world projects for organisations such as NTUC, SIA, HP and DBS.

These projects are aimed at helping organisations solve a real need while enabling students to put into practice what they have learnt.

With the MTech degree, students may acquire sufficient knowledge to meet the ever-growing industry's demands of skilled professionals.

Learning hub

NUS-ISS, established in 1981, develops digital talent for the industry through graduate education, professional development programmes, consultancy, applied research and career services. It is widely recognised as a champion of the national SkillsFuture movement, enabling a digital economy that is always learning and leading.

NUS-ISS has implemented a portfolio of multiple learning pathways, with a spectrum of programmes in critical industry disciplines, such as software development, data science, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, smart health, digital government and digital innovation.

To date, over 120,000 information and business professionals, 6,800 corporate customers and 5,500 post-graduate alumni members have benefited from NUS-ISS's suite of services. Its programmes are delivered by NUS-ISS staff with an average of more than 20 years of industry experience.

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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I

Getting a foothold in the IT industry

Obtaining a GDipSA at NUS-ISS was Mr Quan Junye's ticket to a career switch

How does someone with little or no experience in information technology (IT) plan to join the sector?

Follow in the footsteps of Mr Quan Junye, 28, who made the career switch from the oil and gas industry.

A key enabler was enrolling for the Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis (GDipSA) at the Institute of Systems Science at the National University of Singapore (NUS-ISS), which he completed last year.

Mr Quan tells us more about his learning journey:

Why did you enrol in this programme?

During my undergraduate years pursuing a Bachelor of Engineering in Materials Engineering at the Nanyang Technological University, I enjoyed the compulsory module on computer programming so much that I signed up for an online course in Python programming language on my own.

Although I worked in the oil and gas industry for two years after my graduation, I continued to be interested in software development.

It was a junior college friend who pursued the GDipSA and convinced me that a career switch to software development may be possible.

After obtaining the GDipSA, I got a job as a software engineer involved in developing a web application development.



PHOTO: TED CHEN

Besides its focused structure, what sets the NUS-ISS GDipSA apart from similar courses?

Even for people who have some prior experience in IT, the fast-paced, compact structure of this course offers a challenge.

For example, I recall having to learn basic procedural programming concepts in five days.

A key highlight is the amount of knowledge imparted. Programming concepts are continually being instilled, and we are trained to think from a system analyst's perspective. This training is useful for us to gain employment.

Another aspect is the industrial internship experience, which provides a good opportunity to experience different career roles in the IT industry.

At the same time, the GDipSA is being constantly updated to stay current.

GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN SYSTEMS ANALYSIS (GDIPSA)

- Institute of Systems Science at National University of Singapore (NUS-ISS)
- Full-time: One year

Tech professional Alfred Tam pursues the MTech ITL at NUS-ISS to boost his business skills



PHOTO: TED CHEN

Bridging the skills gap

An information technology (IT) professional with about 20 years of experience, Mr Alfred Tam, in his 40s, realises there are occasional gaps in his skills when he engages with business leaders.

To address these gaps, he enrolled in the part-time Master of Technology in IT Leadership (MTech ITL) programme at the Institute of Systems Science at National University of Singapore (NUS-ISS), which he started in July 2018.

He is looking forward to the upcoming modules in his course — such as Business and IT Financial Management, and Measuring and Demonstrating Value from IT Investments — as these will equip him to communicate with business leaders and corporate sponsors with more confidence.

In his current job, Mr Tam leads digital innovation and programmes in a group enterprise business unit, where he contributes to developing group enterprise digital strategy, process design and implementation.

He tells us more about his course:

What drew you to pursue the MTech ITL?

It has a blend of advanced business and IT modules,

which will help me sharpen my skill sets in digital leadership, innovation leadership, transformation

strategy and business partnership.

The programme's teachings on digital leadership can equip me with the right business and technology leadership knowledge to be an effective business partner and revenue contributor.

What have you enjoyed most in the course and why?

The Fundamentals of IT Leadership Transformation module inspired me to be a team motivator and practice results-oriented leadership.

The Strategic Alignment of Business & IT module helped me to develop digital strategies that align with my company's vision and mission. Another module I enjoyed is IT Innovation Leadership, which ignited my passion for innovation as well as design-thinking approach in product development.

MASTER OF TECHNOLOGY IN IT LEADERSHIP

- Institute of Systems Science at National University of Singapore (NUS-ISS)
- Full-time: One year
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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I



PHOTO: TED CHEN

technical consultation to business partners in strategic markets.

I also worked at another food and beverage multinational corporation as a product developer for six years.

In 2005, I graduated from NUS with a Bachelor of Applied Science (Honours) in Food Science and Technology.

What attracted you to the course?

I like to keep up with the rapidly advancing field of technology and nutrition science by increasing my knowledge — for example about nutrition trends or even about ongoing research that may potentially help to improve quality of life.

Modules on modern human nutrition or frontiers of food processing and engineering are also useful.

I also enjoy learning to apply knowledge in inter-disciplinary contexts, for instance, product development with combined approaches from food processes, appetite management and nutrition balance.

Lastly, I appreciate the entrepreneurial atmosphere in the NUS campus that bridges technology development with needs in real life, and provides opportunities to gain access to start-up initiatives and lean start-up methodology.

What advice will you offer people looking to take up postgraduate studies?

It's all about time and energy management. Set up a schedule to complete work tasks, give yourself plenty of time for study topics and don't forget to slot in rest breaks.

The research project module is compulsory and may require laboratory work. Careful planning and pre-consultation with the academic staff are recommended.

Master of Science in Food Science and Human Nutrition

- National University of Singapore
- Full-time: One to three years
- Part-time: Two to four years

What's it like to embark on a postgraduate study of food and nutrition at NUS? Ms Lew Wan Peng spills the beans

Ms Lew Wan Peng, 36, is pursuing a full-time Master of Science in Food Science and Human Nutrition at National University of Singapore (NUS).

She tells us how the course is an excellent platform to upskill herself:

Describe your work and study experience.

I was a technical sales manager for seven years in specialist firms providing functional food ingredients from carbohydrate sources, sugar replacers and food protection systems.

My key responsibilities included business development in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, as well as providing

technical consultation to business partners in strategic markets.

I also worked at another food and beverage multinational corporation as a product developer for six years.

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- National University of Singapore
- Full-time: One to three years
- Part-time: Two to four years



PHOTO: PSB ACADEMY

Self-improvement matters

Mr Edwin Tan took a Master of Science in Engineering Business Management from Coventry University offered through PSB Academy

For Mr Edwin Tan, learning is a lifelong journey with opportunities that you create for yourself.

Not deterred by a poor performance at his first attempt at the O-levels, Mr Tan tried again the following year and achieved stellar results.

After working in various industries over the years, he decided to pursue a diploma in business from the University of Canberra in 2004. In 2006, he joined the ship-building industry working in operations and production. He then obtained another Diploma in Marine & Offshore Technology from Ngee Ann Polytechnic in 2011.

Yet, he continued to search for opportunities to upgrade himself.

With his wealth of working experience, Mr Tan was able to enrol in the Master of Science in Engineering Business Management from Coventry

University offered through PSB Academy in 2017. Last year, the 47-year-old was not only promoted to an assistant manager in his organisation, but also graduated top of his cohort.

Mr Tan shares more about his post-graduate study experience:

What drew you to the course?
My work involves looking for ways to improve various functions in my organisation, including the adoption of newer technology and the move towards digitalisation.

The modules of the master's programme were relevant to my field of work, touching on areas of quality management, project management, making financial decisions, and lean six sigma — a combination of improvement methods that seeks to reduce an organisation's costs by making processes more efficient. The part-time course also allowed me to balance work, family and study time with classes.

What were some of the highlights?
The course modules helped me perform my work better, but my classmates were also people from all walks of life that I had the pleasure of learning from.

I pursued the master's for a sense of personal achievement and also learnt a new skill — dissertation writing. It is something I have always wanted to do.

Would you recommend this course?
This programme is particularly good for those with an engineering background who are looking for a flexible course on weekends. The educators are also helpful, always ready to provide guidance and share their knowledge.

Master of Science in Engineering Business Management

- Coventry University (offered by PSB Academy)
- Full-time: From 12 months
- Part-time: From 15 months

Hungry for knowledge

What's it like to embark on a postgraduate study of food and nutrition at NUS? Ms Lew Wan Peng spills the beans

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My key responsibilities included business development in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, as well as providing

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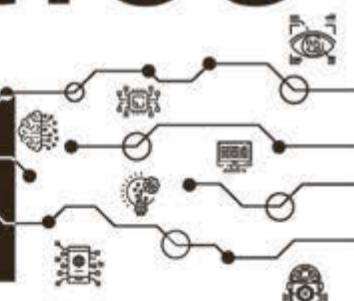
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1:45-4:30 pm

Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium

NUS University Town
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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES I

sweet spot
Partner Content

Keep learning

The Master of Education (Early Childhood) from the National Institute of Education gave Ms Lynn Koh more insights into research methodologies in her field



PHOTO: TED CHEN

After giving up a decade-long banking career to care for her son, Ms Lynn Koh was prompted to rejoin the workforce when her young son made a remark about having a teacher for a parent.

Since then, she has been in the Early Childhood (EC) industry for more than 18 years.

Today, she is a centre principal at one of the centres under MY World Preschool, overseeing its entire operation. She is also a 2017 graduate of the Master of Education (Early Childhood) programme at the National Institute of Education (NIE), an

autonomous institute of Nanyang Technological University.

Ms Koh shares her thoughts about her learning journey:

What drew you to take up the Master of Education (Early Childhood)?

My years in banking taught me the need to continually upgrade my skills and knowledge to keep abreast with changing times.

I embarked on the master's programme in 2015 under the Early Childhood Development Agency's Teaching Award sponsorship. I was in my 50s

then, working as a principal at another childcare centre.

What were some unforgettable experiences?

The rigorous process of learning about research methodologies and writing my own research paper was mentally, physically and emotionally challenging.

However, it brought about a new appreciation of what and how research may benefit our community. With what I've learnt, I could even do an action research to improve the work practices for my teachers that will also benefit children under their charge.

How has the programme helped you?

Learning at NIE was an enriching experience that kept me informed of current research findings, other teaching approaches and good practices that can be used in my workplace.

This postgraduate programme helped me to explore trends and issues in EC, which are important for me, as a leader, to know in order to stay relevant.

It also provided a good platform for me to learn from other EC practitioners.

All these assisted me in achieving the Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) for my previous childcare centre at the first attempt without engaging professional help.

MASTER OF EDUCATION (EARLY CHILDHOOD)

- National Institute of Education, an autonomous institute of Nanyang Technological University
- Full-time: One to two years
- Part-time: Two to four years

For more information on NIE's programmes, visit the NIE Postgraduate & Continuing Education Fair on May 11.



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Our coursework programmes are designed for university graduates who wish to advance their knowledge and careers in their chosen fields. The programmes we offer are as follows:

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- Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.)
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NUS National University of Singapore | Department of Real Estate
School of Design and Environment

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Master of Science (Real Estate) & Master of Business Administration Double Degree Programme

(Jointly offered by NUS Department of Real Estate and Renmin Business School)

Full-time students will spend 1 year at Renmin University of China and 1 year at the National University of Singapore to obtain an MBA degree in management and a MSc degree in Real Estate. You get to experience a kaleidoscope of opportunities within the academic settings of these two prestigious universities.

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Master of Business Administration & Master of Science (Real Estate) Double Degree Programme

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The NUS MBA-MRE DDP programme trains students to be analytical problem solvers capable of integrating cutting-edge knowledge in business and real estate. Its curriculum places strong emphasis on developing global awareness, cross-cultural diversity and environmental awareness.

Closing Date: Full-Time: 31 March 2019 Part-time: 15 May 2019

Graduate Programmes by Research

- Master of Science (Real Estate & Urban Economics)
- Doctor of Philosophy

Application deadline: 15 May 2019



For further information please contact **Yvonne** at e-mail: rsty@nus.edu.sg or visit the department's website: www.rst.nus.edu.sg

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Lim Chang Siang | Research Assistant, Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore, Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis, 45th Intake

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Vena Yunitantria (Indonesia), Master of Science in Management, Class of 2017

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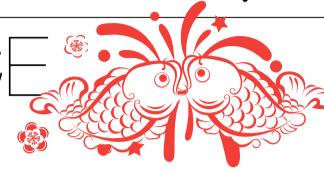
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CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE

At the heart of every sumptuous reunion dinner is family – forging these bonds are heartfelt conversations, shared traditions and a surplus of everyone's favourite dishes. Bring your loved ones closer together this Chinese New Year with these unique creations and tempting takeaways in this Special.

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Seek and you shall find

Restaurateurs search for top-notch ingredients to bring the best to your reunion dinner table

BY MEREDITH WOO

There is more to your abalone dish than meets the eye. As you slice into the supple yet tender meat of the Blacklip abalone at Peach Garden Chinese Restaurant, you can savour the knowledge that the dish made it to your dining table

after a long process. Its journey to Singapore began in March last year, during a sourcing trip to Port Lincoln in South Australia.

On the trip were Ms Veronica Tan (right) and Ms Angela Ho, the general managers of Peach Garden Group of Restaurants. With them was managing director Vincent Tan (far right), as well as Ms Ivy Lim, assistant director, purchasing of Select Group (Peach Garden's headquarters).

Says Ms Tan: "Abalone harvested from the wild waters surrounding Port Lincoln are regarded as some of the finest in the world. Port Lincoln is home to two commercially harvested species of abalone: Greenlip (*Haliotis laevigata*) and Blacklip (*Haliotis rubra*)."

She adds that the

management, with the

purchasing head and a

team of master chefs,

visit various cities in

China and Hong Kong

at least once a year to

source for ingredients as

well as find inspiration for new dishes. Sourcing typically begins three to six months ahead of occasions or promotions.

"Food suppliers also regularly update us on local seasonal produce or new ingredients available in the market. We actively monitor food trends and seek out on-trend ingredients through our headquarters' procurement department as well as our network of suppliers, partners and trade associations," notes Ms Tan.



A sourcing trip to Port Lincoln. PHOTOS: SELECT GROUP

*Abalone harvested from the wild waters surrounding Port Lincoln are regarded as some of the finest in the world. Port Lincoln is home to two commercially harvested species of abalone: Greenlip (*Haliotis laevigata*) and Blacklip (*Haliotis rubra*).*

Ms Veronica Tan
general manager,
Peach Garden Group of
Restaurants



continued on P4



The new Double Fish Nian Gao.
PHOTOS: TUNGLOK GROUP

Eat more greens this CNY

**TungLok Group's
nutritious festive dishes
prove that vegetarian
dishes needn't be bland**

BY MEREDITH WOO

TungLok Group has been reducing sugar in its Chinese New Year favourites, such as yu sheng and nian gao, for a healthier spin — without compromising on flavour. This year, why not try its vegetarian dishes from the LingZhi Vegetarian outlets at Liat Towers and Velocity@ Novena Square?

PROSPERITY VEGETARIAN YU SHENG

This multi-hued yu sheng dish is chock-full of 20 premium ingredients such as purple cabbage, snow pear, pomelo, cordyceps flower, lotus root and more. Price: \$48++ (for six persons), \$78++ (for 10 persons).



Prosperity Vegetarian Yu Sheng.

LONGEVITY TREASURE BOWL

Another must-try is LingZhi's vegetarian pen cai — a layered delight of 18 fresh ingredients braised with a superior sauce. Inside, you will find black moss, wolfberries, "Bai Ling" mushroom, "Huai Shan" or Chinese yam, fresh bamboo roll, yellow fungus, and more. Price: \$198++ (for six persons), \$268++ (for 10 persons).



Longevity Treasure Bowl.

VEGETARIAN TAKE-HOME FEAST

Beat the crowds with LingZhi's Vegetarian Take-Home Feast. It comprises a Longevity Treasure Bowl, Prosperity Vegetarian Yu Sheng, Fragrant Rice Wrapped in Lotus Leaf, Thai-style Deep-fried Vegetarian Fish, and TungLok Nian Gao. Price: \$268++ (for six persons), \$368++ (for 10 persons)

MORE TREATS

But if going vegetarian is not for you, TungLok Group also has other yu sheng, pen cai and take-home feast offerings packed with lots of glorious meat and seafood.

You can also order from its Festive Gifts menu. Items are made without preservatives and include the new Double Fish Nian Gao (\$42+ per box), TungLok Pork Bak Kwa (\$35+ per 500g), and the TungLok X.O. Sauce (\$9.80+ per 95g bottle) made with dried conpoy and silver bait.

Visit www.tunglok.com for more information.

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15%* OFF for Take-away Yu Sheng, Pen Cai and Take-Home Feast. For MVG/tunglokfirst members, Citi and UOB Credit/Debit cardmembers only, Till 20 January 2019, at all restaurants (except Tóng Lè Private Dining, Dancing Crab and Slappy Cakes).

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PROSPERITY YU SHENG

A timeless must-have piece of edible art every New Year strewn with smoked Norwegian Salmon, a vibrant harmony of fresh vegetables, mushroom, yam and sweet potato shreds; and lastly, drizzled with TungLok's lower in sugar yu sheng sauce.



TUNG LOK NIAN GAO

First in Singapore to be recognised by Health Promotion Board (HPB) for its lower sugar content and as a source of dietary fibre. It is available in four flavours prepared using only the finest ingredients.



* Vegetarian versions of the Prosperity Yu Sheng, Pen Cai and Take-Home Feast are available at LingZhi Vegetarian restaurants.

- Traditional / Pandan / Black Sesame / Red Dates



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SHIN YEH RESTAURANT 欣葉台菜

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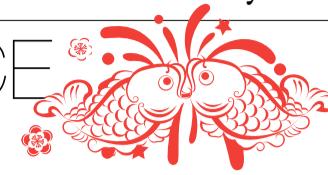
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CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Continued from P2



Dried oysters are a prized ingredient in Chinese cuisine.

Seek and you shall find

SEARCHING FOR DRIED TREASURES

Once a month, executive chef Fong Chee Chung from Carlton City Hotel Singapore spends three hours at a wholesale market. His go-to place? Albert Centre Wholesale Market as it is well known for its quality produce and reasonable prices.

There, he goes from stall to stall in a thorough

fashion to make price and quality comparisons. But a single trip does not always cut it for him. "Sometimes, I will make a few trips to ensure that the quality of the produce from my shortlisted stalls is consistent before I confirm the purchase with the wholesale supplier," he says.

For example, Chef Fong says the ideal size of a dried oyster ranges from 5 to 5.5cm per piece as its size and texture defines its quality. The dried oyster should also be clean and fragrant, thoroughly dried and firm. In fish maw, he looks for one that is smooth and golden

yellow, tinged with the smell of the sea. It should also be of a substantial thickness to give a better mouthfeel when cooked.

These prized dried oysters and fish maw, which in Chinese symbolise "good" and "abundance" respectively, feature in Carlton City Hotel Singapore's Auspicious Treasure Pot or Poon Choy in Cantonese.

Fish maw.
PHOTOS: ISTOCK,
CARLTON CITY HOTEL
SINGAPORE



Sometimes, I will make a few trips to ensure that the quality of the produce from my shortlisted stalls is consistent before I confirm the purchase with the wholesale supplier.

Mr Fong Chee Chung
executive chef,
Carlton City Hotel Singapore

continued on P6



Lobster, Sea Urchin, Hokkaido Scallop, Salmon, Tuna, Caviar & Crispy Fish Skin Yu Sheng

EXQUISITE LUNAR NEW YEAR CREATIONS

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Nostalgic Festive Flavours at Szechuan Court

Usher in an auspicious Lunar Year at Fairmont Singapore where an abundance of culinary treasures await.

Delight in harmonious reunions as Master Chef Mok Wan Lok of Szechuan Court unveils six thoughtfully crafted set menus with new festive favourites, alongside impressive signatures; available from 24 January to 19 February 2019.

A scrumptious selection of Yu Sheng is available from \$58++.

Early Bird Specials for Sunday Times readers
Quote "SUTCNY" and enjoy 25% off set menu (dine-in) when you make reservation by 31 January 2019.
Offer excludes 4 and 5 February 2019.

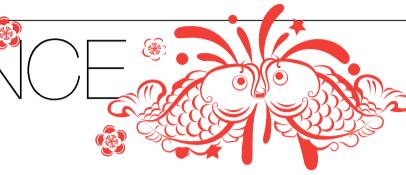
For reservations, please call +65 6431 6156, email dining.singapore@fairmont.com or book online at szechuancourt.com.sg.



Level 3, Fairmont Singapore

An ACCORHOTELS brand

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Feast without fuss

Dine in style with Crystal Jade's festive takeaway delights



Auspicious Reunion Feast Bundle. PHOTO: CRYSTAL JADE

BY JAC WOO

Avoid crowded restaurants during the Chinese New Year (CNY) season and feast in comfort at your home gathering or office party with Crystal Jade's festive takeaway delights. Here are some top picks to order:

AUSPICIOUS REUNION FEAST BUNDLE

Savour five delicacies at one go — Bountiful Abalone Treasure Pot, Norwegian Salmon Reunion Yusheng, Crystal Jade Fortune Chicken, Fried Glutinous Rice, and a choice of Glutinous Rice Cake or Carrot Cake. Price: \$368.80 (for five persons), \$588.80 (for 10 persons).

ETERNAL BLISS PLATTER

Tuck into a set of five sweet and savoury festive cakes — Prosperity Carrot Cake, Abundance Yam Cake,

Fortune Glutinous Rice Cake, Red Dates Coconut Cake and Golden Osmanthus Chrysanthemum Cake. Price: \$38.80.

CNY GOODIES

These delightful favourites make perfect festive gifts — Fortune Bo Lo Pineapple Tarts, Almond Puff Cookies, Lychee Cranberry Cookies and Red Dates Walnut Cookies. Price: from \$13.80 each.

Visit estore.crystaljade.com for details and online orders. Terms and conditions apply.

Cardmember deals

From now till Feb 19, Jadeite members, Citibank and UOB cardmembers can enjoy more than 12 per cent off purchases of festive takeaway goodies online or at participating outlets.

ORDER NOW AT ESTORE.CRYSTALJADE.COM

Terms and conditions: Prices subject to service charge and prevailing GST. Promotion is valid for Jadeite members with payment made by Citibank OR UOB Credit/Debit Cards. Earning and redemption of JPoints are not allowed. #Festive Takeaway: Orders are to be placed 3 working days in advance. All festive takeaway items are not valid with any other promotion, discount and/or voucher. *Festive Set Menu: Valid from 21 Jan to 19 Feb 2019. Value of cash dining vouchers issued is equivalent to 10% of set menu listed price before service charge and prevailing GST. Other terms and conditions apply.

EXCLUSIVELY FOR CITI, UOB CARDMEMBERS AND JADEITE MEMBERS



crystaljade.com

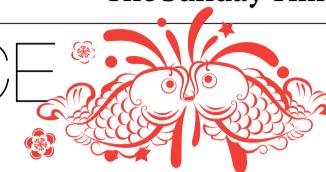
@crystaljade.sg

@crystaljadesg

Chinese culinary group with **MICHELIN** One star and multiple **MICHELIN** Bib Gourmand awards over 120 restaurants across 30 major cities



CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Continued from P4

Seek and you shall find

TASTE AND CREATIVITY

Two months ahead of a campaign, Crystal Jade's culinary team will start sourcing for a few providers and will shortlist those that have quality produce at reasonable prices. Other factors it takes into consideration include the availability of seasonal produce and health benefits of the ingredients.



Hamachi: Yellowtail or Japanese amberjack.

There are two to three sourcing trips every year.

For Chinese New Year, this process can begin as early as September, and in some years, it can be more challenging.

Says a Crystal Jade spokesman: "This time, due to a shortage of selected ingredients due to seasonality, we compared up to eight vendors and consolidated company-wide feedback through internal blind tastings."

In addition to its focus on quality and taste, the brand also looks for ways to use unique ingredients creatively.

Take for example, its *yu sheng* offering this year, in which umibudō (sea grapes) and hamachi (yellowtail or Japanese amberjack) are used to enhance the flavour and



Umibudō, or sea grapes. PHOTOS: ISTOCK

texture of the traditional dish.

Umibudō, a kind of sea algae, has a sublime saltiness with its bubble-like "leaves" offering a textural pop, while hamachi is buttery and creamy with a clean finish.

This time, due to a shortage of selected ingredients due to seasonality, we compared up to eight vendors and consolidated company-wide feedback through internal blind tastings.

Crystal Jade spokesman

sweet

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Splendid Feasts & Bountiful Blessings
15 Jan to 19 Feb 2019

A bountiful new year with sumptuous reunions beckon at SONG GARDEN CHINESE RESTAURANT

Prosperity Yu Sheng

Supreme Fortune Pot

Usher in a prosperous Year of the Pig with a trove of auspicious modern Cantonese dishes. Specials include Prosperity Salmon & Fresh Fruit *Yu Sheng*, Supreme Fortune Pot, Braised Lobster with Pumpkin Puree served in Hot Stone Pot, Crispy Roast Duck with Osmanthus Sauce, Golden Pillow White Pepper Pork Spare Ribs Bun & more!

9-Course Cantonese Set Menus
From S898++ (per table of 10 persons)

6-course Cantonese Set Menus
From S98++ per person

7-Course Vegetarian Set Menu
S88++ per person

Home Reunion Takeaway Set
S498+ (for 5 persons) / S798+ (for 10 persons)

Set includes a Prosperity Salmon *Yu Sheng*, Supreme Fortune Pot, Crispy Roast Duck with Osmanthus Sauce, Wok-fried Glutinous Rice with Waxed Meat, Deep-fried Glutinous Rice Cake.

Citibank & UOB cardholders enjoy 18% off all goodies (*Yu Sheng*, Supreme Fortune Pot, Festive Specialty Cakes) takeaway and Home Reunion Takeaway Set. Terms & Conditions apply.

For reservations or enquiries, please call us at 6521 9299 or visit songgarden.sg for more information. Song Garden is located at Level 2, Mercure Singapore Bugis, 122 Middle Road, S(188973)

萬興酒樓集團
Ban Heng® Group of Restaurants
www.banheng.com.sg

Lunar New Year No Delivery Home Delivery Charge Hotline: **6298 5285** **6291 0407**

Buy "Pen-Cai" Free Assorted Seafood in Claypot
\$188 \$288
For 4 to 6 pax For 8 to 10 pax

Monk Jumps Over The Wall
\$388 \$688
For 5 pax For 10 pax ✓ FREE Good Luck & Prosperity *Yu Sheng*
✓ FREE Prosperity Claypot
✓ FREE Dining Voucher

Reunion / Celebration Set Menus from \$398 for 10 pax

CNY Eve / Crispy Whole Suckling Pig 9-course Set Menu \$698 for 10 pax
Ban Heng *Yusheng* with Salmon & Crispy Fish Skin, Crispy Whole Suckling Pig, Braised Shark's Fin with Dried Scallop and Crab Meat, Steamed Live Soon Hock Fish with Superior Soya Sauce in Hong Kong Style, Sautéed Fresh Scallops & Vegetables with XO Sauce in Golden Nest, Wok-fried King Prawns with Cereal & Butter, Braised 10-Headed Abalone & Black Moss with Spinach, Fried Rice with Chinese Sausage in Lotus Leaf, Sweetened Yam Paste with Pumpkin

Salmon *Yu Sheng* Take-away @ \$28 (For self collect only)

Available at all outlets. Please call or visit www.banheng.com.sg for more details

Ban Heng @ Harbourfront 6278-0288
Ban Heng @ Pasir Ris 6585-1770
Ban Heng @ Orchard Central 6238-1516
Ban Heng @ Boon Keng 6291-0407

Home Delivery service payment by cheque to:
Ban Heng Air Conditioned Restaurant Pte Ltd
Mall to: Blk 22 Boon Keng Road #01-21 Singapore 330022
Or make payment at any of the outlets under Ban Heng Group of Restaurants via PayNow, Credit Card or Cash
Ban Heng @ Boon Keng: All prices subject to 7% GST.
For other outlets: All prices subject to 10% Service Charge and 7% GST.

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Happiness in a pot

Carlton City Hotel Singapore ushers in the Year of the Pig with sumptuous takeaways in a crock

BY NIVANI ELANGOVAN

Every Chinese New Year, dishes are reinvented and Carlton City Hotel Singapore is an expert at doing this.

At its Lunar New Year Shoppe this year, the hotel will be rolling out some new fuss-free takeaway options, as well as classic signatures.

Be sure to get the unique Lobster and Crab Cheese Bee Hoon Abundance Pot (\$108 net), a hearty blend of rice noodles, seafood and cheese gravy.

Another new offering to savour is the Yam and Pork Belly Fortune Pot (\$68 net), a generous crock of sim-

mered pork belly and Yam, doused in fermented bean curd sauce.

Traditionalists can opt for the signature Auspicious Treasure Pot (\$168 net), a decadent treat that features classic premium ingredients such as baby abalone, dried oysters, fish maw, roast pork and fatt choy (black moss) in a superior broth.

Call the Lunar New Year Shoppe at 6632-8921 to place your order.

Alternatively, opt for a reunion buffet at Plate. Dining groups of six or more are entitled to a complimentary platter of signature Classic Abundance Salmon Yu Sheng. Call 6632-8922 or visit www.carltoncity.sg to make a reservation.



The Auspicious Treasure Pot is stocked to the brim with duck, dried scallops, baby abalone and more. PHOTO: CARLTON CITY HOTEL SINGAPORE



CARLTON CITY
HOTEL | SINGAPORE

THE AWAKENING OF SPRING

LUNAR NEW YEAR AT CARLTON CITY HOTEL SINGAPORE

LUNAR NEW YEAR SHOPPE

LOBBY LEVEL | 21 JAN - 19 FEB 2019 | 10.30 AM - 7 PM | T (65) 6632 8921

Reaffirm family ties and reunite with loved ones this Lunar New Year as you entertain your guests with fuss-free takeaway options of homemade Chinese delicacies and goodies from the Lunar New Year Shoppe. Celebrate with classic Chinese dishes including our signature *Auspicious Treasure Pot*, our brand new *Lobster and Crab Cheese Bee Hoon Abundance Pot* and *Yam and Pork Belly Fortune Pot*, and all-time favourite *Classic Abundance Salmon Yu Sheng*. Alternatively, indulge in bite-sized goodies such as *Premium Pineapple Tarts* and *Deep-fried Fish Skin with Egg Yolk*.

REUNION BUFFETS

PLATE | LEVEL 3 | 21 JAN - 19 FEB 2019 | T (65) 6632 8922

Celebrate the Lunar New Year festivities with reunion buffets at Plate and enjoy a resplendent spread of Asian and International delights, including fresh seafood on ice, Chinese delicacies, appetisers, soups, traditional festive desserts and more.

Reunion Weekday Buffet Lunch

21 JAN - 19 FEB | 12 PM - 2.30 PM | \$58++ per person

Lunar New Year Buffet Dinner

4 & 5 FEB | 6.30 PM - 10 PM | \$78++ per person

EVERY DINER WILL ENJOY A COMPLIMENTARY SERVING OF ABALONE

Children aged 7 to 12 years old dine at 50% off. Children 6 years old and below dine for free.

EXCLUSIVE: 1-FOR-1

FOR REUNION WEEKDAY BUFFET LUNCH.
VALID FOR CITIBANK CARDMEMBERS ONLY*
TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY.

FREE YU SHENG

COME IN A GROUP OF 6 PERSONS AND ABOVE,
AND GET OUR CLASSIC ABUNDANCE SALMON
YU SHENG ON OUR COMPLIMENTS!
TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY.



AUSPICIOUS CELEBRATIONS

at Orchard Hotel Singapore

Celebrate reunions in grand style with our enhanced offerings - from time-honoured signatures and creative classics at brand new The Orchard Cafe to prosperous set menus at Hua Ting Restaurant and Hua Ting Steamboat.

12 PROSPERITY SET MENUS & AUSPICIOUS TAKEAWAYS

21 January to 19 February 2019

New Highlights:

- Smoked Salmon "Lo Hei" Yu Sheng with Organic Seasonal Greens and Red Plum Sauce
- Golden Pumpkin Cake with Organic Black Garlic and Chinese Sausage
- Deluxe Pen Cai

Hua Ting Restaurant
6739 6666

FORTUNE HOTPOT REUNIONS

21 January to 28 February 2019

- Fresh Garoupa
- Top Grade Australian Scallops
- US Kurobuta Pork

Hua Ting Steamboat
6739 6628

BOUNTIFUL SIGNATURE CLASS BUFFETS

4-6 & 19 February 2019

- Yu Sheng Bar
- Roast Suckling Pig
- Preserved Duck Rice with Sausage in Lotus Leaves

The Orchard Cafe
6739 6565



442 Orchard Road Singapore 238879 | www.orchardhotel.com.sg
 OrchardHotelSingapore

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE

Dining options for every budget

Take your pick from these three establishments over the festive period



Wah Lok's signature Alaskan Crab Lo Hei. PHOTO: CARLTON HOTEL SINGAPORE

BY MEREDITH WOO

AWARD-WINNING CUISINE AT CARLTON HOTEL SINGAPORE

Accorded numerous awards since it opened in 1988, Wah Lok Cantonese Restaurant at Carlton Hotel Singapore will get the nod from your gourmand friends.

From Jan 21 to Feb 19, indulge in classic reunion delights by Masterchef Ng Wai Tong and his team of culinary experts. Dishes include Wah Lok's signature Alaskan Crab Lo Hei (from \$138++ for dine-in and from \$138 net for takeaway) and the new Auspicious Golden Pot (from \$208++) that comprises premium ingredients such as deer sinew, goose web, fish curd and morel mushrooms. Chinese New Year (CNY) set menus priced from \$398++ for four people are also available.

Call 6311-8188 / 6311-8189 or e-mail wah.lok@carltonhotel.sg for reservations.

carte and takeaway) with the refreshing goodness of dragon fruit, rock melon, apples, mango and pear. The Golden Pillow White Pepper Pork Spare Ribs Bun — created to symbolise wealth for the Year of the Pig — is available in one of Song Garden's CNY set menus (from \$898++ per table of 10 people; or \$98++ per person, minimum of two to dine).

Call 6521-9299 for reservations.



Get festive with Ban Heng's buffet promotions.
PHOTO: BAN HENG GROUP OF RESTAURANTS



Song Garden's Salmon & Fresh Fruit Yu Sheng.
PHOTO: MERCURE SINGAPORE BUGIS

CONTEMPORARY CANTONESE FARE AT MERCURE SINGAPORE BUGIS

If your dining party prefers classic Cantonese with a touch of modernity, head to Song Garden Chinese Restaurant at Mercure Singapore Bugis.

From Jan 15 to Feb 19, savour its signature Salmon & Fresh Fruit Yu Sheng (from \$98++ for both a la

WALLET-FRIENDLY BUFFETS AT BAN HENG

Enjoy an all-you-can-eat feast at Ban Heng Group of Restaurants.

Its Chinese Seafood Ala Carte Buffet Lunch and Dinner at all branches (from \$31.80++ per person) includes crispy cereal prawns and deep-fried Soon Hock fish. Top up \$7++ for the Seafood Menu B for chilli crab, 10-head whole abalone and more. One adult dines free with every three paying adults.

The seafood buffet is not available from Jan 30 to Feb 19, but Ban Heng @ HarbourFront Centre will still be serving its Dim Sum Buffet Lunch (except Feb 3 to 5) with a 30 per cent discount on the Crispy Fish Skin Yu Sheng Lo Hei.

Visit www.banheng.com.sg or call 6278-0288 or 6278-1354 for more details.

Terms and conditions apply for all.

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Sichuan splendour

Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro at Mandarin Orchard Singapore offers a distinctly different spread



Delight loved ones with goodies. PHOTOS: MANDARIN ORCHARD SINGAPORE

BY LUKE TAN

For a twist on Chinese New Year cuisines, tantalise your taste buds with Sichuan-style delicacies at the two-Michelin-starred Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro.

AUSPICIOUS MENUS

The restaurant's seven auspiciously themed set menus feature dishes such as double-boiled free-range chicken soup with bird's nest, sea coconut and snow pear, roasted chicken with Sichuan mala sauce, and deep-fried prawn with yuzu sauce.

Choose from the Prosperity menu (\$538++ for four persons) to the Splendour menu featuring braised four-head Australian abalone (\$2,588++ for 10 persons). Both are eight-course menus.

TAKEAWAY SPECIALS

Usher in the Year of the Pig by feasting in the comfort of your home with Mandarin Orchard Singapore's takeaway specialities.

Treat your loved ones to a baby abalone fortune pot — also known as pen cai — that features 20 premium delicacies including dried oyster, fish maw and Chinese sausage.

Each purchase comes with a complimentary salmon yu sheng as well as glutinous rice with dried sausages.

Other goodies you can stock up on include Hokkaido pumpkin steamed nian gao, golden pineapple ingots, and steamed yam cake with dried scallop.

Try the new crispy caramel treats with pine nuts, a delicious snack that is crispy on the outside and soft on the inside.

For reservations and enquiries, e-mail shisenhanten.orchard@meritushotels.com or call 6831-6262/6266.



Chinese New Year specialities with a Sichuan twist feature at Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro.

**LUNAR NEW YEAR DELIGHTS**

Usher in a prosperous Year of the Pig with a sumptuous feast.

**AUSPICIOUS SET MENUS**
22 January to 19 February 2019

Celebrate the Lunar New Year in style at the highest Michelin-rated Chinese restaurant in Singapore.

Shisen Hanten, Level 35, Orchard Wing
Lunch & Dinner

TAKEAWAY GOODIES
18 January to 03 February 2019
Festive Booth, Level 1
11am to 7pm Daily**TOSS FOR PROSPERITY**
04 to 19 February 2019

Toss to greater heights and fortune as you gather with your loved ones to savour the classic lo hei.

Chatterbox, Level 5
Lunch & Dinner

**FESTIVE BUFFET**
04 to 06 February 2019

Feast on Lunar New Year specials such as Buddha Jumps over the Wall, Wok-fried Fragrant Spiced Cray Fish, and more!

Triple Three, Level 5
Lunch & Dinner

For more information, go to www.meritushotels.com/diningorchard.

To make a reservation, please call 6831 6288 or email dine.orchard@meritushotels.com.



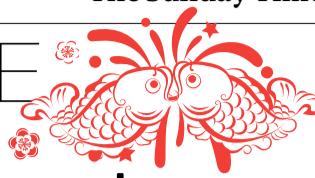
THE SWEET CNY ABUNDANCE TOOL-KIT

In celebration of Chinese New Year, we present to you 2 paper origami to usher in a year of abundance, prosperity and good health. Simply cut out and form the square hongbao, stick it on your doors or hang it from your pussy willow to fill your home with festive flavours. 新年快乐! 万事如意!



※ Cut along the edge, paste the sides together with glue or double-sided tape and you have your exclusive hongbao courtesy of Sweet by SPH.

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Greater than the dim sum of its parts



AUSPICIOUS REUNION

From decadent treasure pots to succulent roasts and festive goodies, Peach Blossoms has everything you need for a hearty reunion dinner. Be sure to try the new Golden Pig-shaped Nian Gao, the new Prosperity Salmon Yu Sheng with Crispy Fish and Nashi Pear, as well as the indulgent Braised 10-head Abalone, Dried Oyster and Bean Curd Bag.

Set menus and takeaway specials are available from 14 January to 19 February 2019

À la carte menu is available from 4 to 19 February 2019

Reservations:

6845 1118 | peachblossoms.marina@meritushotels.com



Level 5
Marina Mandarin Singapore
6 Raffles Boulevard, Marina Square
Singapore 039594

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Szechuan Court at Fairmont Singapore puts a festive twist on its dim sum and fusion cuisine

BY BRYANT CHAN

Dim sum lovers need to look no further than Szechuan Court at Fairmont Singapore to satisfy their cravings this season.

Specially created by Szechuan Court's dim sum specialist Chef Mandy Yeo, the restaurant's Divine Lunar New Year Dim Sum menu is like nothing offered by any other restaurant on the island.

The highlight of the line-up is the Steamed Gold Leaf Prawn Dumplings (\$9.80++ per set of three pieces), which are filled to bursting point with generous helpings of prawn.

Hoping for something a little less traditional?

Szechuan Court has two new eclectic offerings inspired by contemporary East-meets-West fusion cuisine to tantalise the taste buds.

The Pan-Seared Goose Liver Glutinous Rice uses only the finest foie gras, while those who love truffle shouldn't miss the Black Truffle Siew Mai (\$12.80++ per set of three pieces), which uses real black truffle for a decadent dining experience.

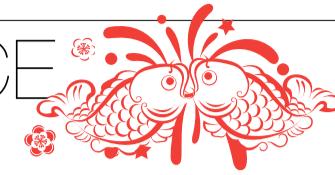
Szechuan Court will be offering these culinary creations from Jan 24 to Feb 19, so you'll have to move fast if you don't want to miss out.

E-mail dining.singapore@fairmont.com or call 6431-6156 to make a reservation.



The Steamed Gold Leaf Prawn Dumplings are the highlight of Szechuan Court's festive dim sum menu. PHOTO: FAIRMONT SINGAPORE

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Fresh catch

Tuck into a trio of must-have dishes at Long Beach Seafood Restaurant



"Da Qian" Claypot Live Crab with Ramen.
PHOTOS: LONG BEACH SEAFOOD RESTAURANT

BY MEREDITH WOO

CLAYPOT LIVE MARBLE GOBY

The marble goby, also known as the soon hock, is simmered in a hearty superior stock rich with the umami of chicken, fish bones, garlic, herbs and other secret ingredients. The result: sweet, tender flesh that holds its own against the strong, savoury soup.

'DA QIAN' CLAYPOT LIVE CRAB WITH RAMEN

This subtly spicy dish features top-grade mud crab in a housemade secret sauce with leek and bell pepper. Enjoy the wok hei flavour of the thick ramen, which soaks up all the delicious sauce.

FRESH LILY BUD WITH PEARL BEANS

This dish comprises nutritious pearl beans and fresh lily buds, which are stir-fried with button mushroom and bell pepper, then topped with crispy fried shrimp.

These three dishes are exclusively available at Long Beach @ Stevens (Tel: 6445-8833) and Long Beach King (Tel: 6344-7722) outlets.

Visit www.longbeachseafood.com.sg for more information.

**Ready, get set, deal!**

Order the Reunion and Chinese New Year set menus to enjoy a free Prosperity Plate yu sheng (worth \$128).
Terms and conditions apply.

Long Beach @ Stevens

30 Stevens Road
#01-10

Lunch: 11am - 3pm
Dinner: 5pm - 12am

6445 8833

Long Beach @ Dempsey

25 Dempsey Road
Left turn to Dempsey
via Holland Road
(before Poice Rd)

Lunch: 11am - 3pm
Dinner: 5pm - 1am

6323 2222

Long Beach IMM

IMM Level 3 #03-07
Next to Rooftop Garden
Jurong East St 21

Lunch: 11am - 3pm
Dinner: 5pm - 11pm

6566 9933

Long Beach UDMC

#01-04 East Coast
Seafood Centre

Daily: 11am - 12am
Sat / Eve of PH: 11am - 1am

6448 3636

Long Beach KING

Next to Kallang Park
KFC/McDonald's
Opp Mountbatten MRT
(via Exit B)

Lunch: 11am - 3pm

Dinner: 5pm - 12am

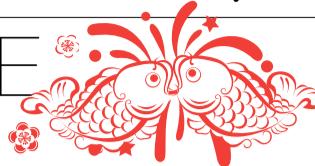
6344 7722

www.longbeachseafood.com.sg

[longbeachseafood](#)

*Images are for illustration purposes only

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Huat's the word

Enjoy these colourful yu sheng offerings with a gleeful twist



LUNAR NEW YEAR TREASURES 2019

18 JANUARY – 19 FEBRUARY (3.05PM)



EXQUISITE TREATS & PROSPERITY SPECIALS

(Available from The Deli, Min Jiang and Min Jiang at One-North)

Usher in a prosperous Year of the Pig with our selection of gourmet treats that are perfect for your festive reunions!

Newly introduced Lunar New Year highlights include the *Drum of Fortune*, *Fruitful Abundance Yu Sheng with Whole Abalone in Raspberry and Sour Plum Sauce*, *Prosperity Duo of Deep-fried Pork Knuckle and Slow-baked Honey Butter Ribs*, *Fortune Delight Crispy 'Heung Song' Duck with Glutinous Rice* and the *hearty Claypots with Sea Treasures*.

FESTIVE FEASTING

Celebrate an auspicious start to the Lunar New Year with decadent set menus and lavish buffet spreads at our award-winning restaurants.

For online reservations, please visit www.goodwoodparkhotel.com.

To place online takeaway orders, please visit festivepromotions.goodwoodparkhotel.com.

The Deli 6730 1786 • Min Jiang 6730 1704 • Min Jiang at One-North 6774 0122
Coffee Lounge 6730 1746 • L'Espresso 6730 1743

All prices are subject to 10% service charge (for dine-in) and 7% GST. Some dishes are available only for dine-in.

*Discounts are not applicable for dine-in, 'bak kwa' and takeaway set menus.

GOODWOOD PARK HOTEL
22 Scotts Road Singapore 228221

TELEPHONE +65 6737 7411
FACSIMILE +65 6732 8558
enquiries@goodwoodparkhotel.com
www.goodwoodparkhotel.com

MEMBER OF THE GOODWOOD GROUP OF HOTELS



Citi, DBS/POSB, OCBC and UOB Credit and Debit Cardmembers enjoy 15% + 5% off* for takeaway orders fully paid by 25 January 2019!



GOODWOOD PARK
HOTEL
singapore



Wan Hao's assortment of CNY offerings. PHOTO: SINGAPORE MARRIOTT TANG PLAZA HOTEL

BY REBECCA RACHEL WONG

INDULGENT DELIGHTS

This year, Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel's Wan Hao Chinese Restaurant brings on the abundance with six types of dine-in or takeaway yu sheng offerings.

The highlight is its novel Lobster, Sea Urchin, Hokkaido Scallop, Salmon, Tuna & Caviar Yu Sheng (large: \$268++) — a lavish choice for celebrating the Chinese New Year. Another unique option is the new Smoked Duck Breast & Crispy Fish Skin Yu Sheng (large: \$128++, small: \$68++).

Diners can also enjoy other takeaway treats, including the addictive Golden Nian Gao Tarts with Green Tea (\$32 net for eight pieces).

For dining reservations or pre-order of takeaway goodies, e-mail mhrs.sindt.fb.reservations@marriotthotels.com or call 6831-4605.

SALMON SURPRISE

Peach Garden Chinese Restaurant's signature salmon lo hei (large: \$108++, small: \$78++) receives a refreshing update with a new roselle dressing.

As a nod to 2019's Chinese zodiac animal, ingredients are presented in the shape of a pig, featuring staples such as ice lettuce, ginger flower and fried yam.

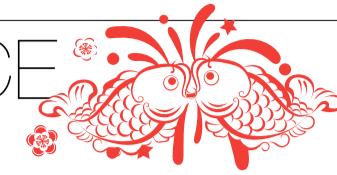
The restaurant also offers takeaway packages such as its Prosperity Treasures Package A (\$838+) that feeds 10 persons with items such as smoked salmon yu sheng, roasted London duck and fried glutinous rice with Chinese sausages.

Call 6252-9833 for enquiries.



Prosperity Treasures Package A. PHOTO: PEACH GARDEN GROUP OF RESTAURANTS

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Creative flourishes

Suckling pig with coconut rice and a koi-shaped dessert are some tasty surprises at Conrad Centennial Singapore

BY MEREDITH WOO

SUCKLING PIG WITH COCONUT RICE

Golden Peony at Conrad Centennial Singapore may just be the first dining establishment here to serve a Roast Suckling Pig stuffed with fragrant Coconut Rice.

The crispy skin of the piglet goes well with the aromatic glutinous rice while the generous dollop of sambal adds some firepower.

Details such as the green-tinged rice and core of otah (grilled fish meat) will surely put a smile on every diner's face.



Roast Suckling Pig stuffed with fragrant Coconut Rice.



Koi Soya Pudding with Hasma, Peach Resin and Red Date Broth.

PHOTOS: CONRAD CENTENNIAL SINGAPORE

A SWIMMINGLY GOOD DESSERT

Another highlight is the Koi Soya Pudding with Hasma, Peach Resin and Red Date Broth.

The dessert is both visually pleasing and a refreshing end to your feast. From a distance, it looks like a fish swimming in a clear pond, its gold accents glinting in the gentle spring sun.

Created by celebrity chef Ku Keung and his team, these dishes are part of Golden Peony's Lunar New Year menus, priced from \$118++ per person or \$1,398++ for a table of 10 people.

Call 6432-7482/88 or visit www.connoisseur.sg for more information.



CELEBRATE CHINESE NEW YEAR WITH A FEAST AT CONRAD

An array of enticing and auspicious dishes awaits you at Conrad Centennial Singapore's Golden Peony restaurant. From Roasted Suckling Pig stuffed with Fragrant Coconut Rice to Abalone "Pen Cai", you will be spoilt for choice.

Our Lunar New Year Menus are from S\$118++ per person or S\$1,398++ for a table of 10 persons.

Available between 21 January and 19 February 2019

For reservations or more information, please call 6432 7482/8 or email sinci.goldenpeony@conradhotels.com

CONRAD
CENTENNIAL
SINGAPORE

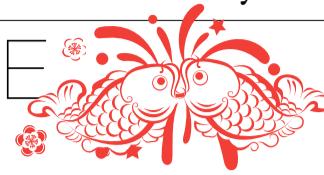
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Hilton
HOTELS

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Say 'hei-lo' to lo hei



USHER IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG

REUNION TREASURES AT WAH LOK 21 January - 19 February 2019

NEW!

Auspicious Golden Pot 4 pax \$208 6 pax \$308

A delectable alternative for Poon Choi, Wah Lok's new Auspicious Golden Pot is packed with premium ingredients such as Deer Sinew, Goose Web, Morel, Pork Ribs, Braised Fish Curd, Fish Maw, Tianjin Cabbage, Chestnut and Black Moss.

Chinese New Year Set Menus

Abundance	4 pax \$398	6 pax \$558
Auspicious	8 pax \$798	10 pax \$988
Fortune	8 pax \$1,118	10 pax \$1,388
Prosperity	8 pax \$1,338	10 pax \$1,688
Vegetarian Set	\$68 per pax (minimum of 4 pax)	

T 6311 8188/189 | E wah.lok@carltonhotel.sg

PROSPERITY BUFFET AT CAFÉ MOSAIC 4 - 6 February 2019

Enjoy a complimentary Yu Sheng Platter per booking on 4 February.

4 Feb CNY Eve	Adult \$88	Child \$42
Buffet Dinner		

5 & 6 Feb CNY Day 1 & 2		
Buffet Lunch	\$68	\$34
Buffet Dinner	\$78	\$39

Enjoy 4-for-3 promotion for Chinese New Year Day 1 & 2 Buffet Lunch and Dinner with selected credit/debit cards.

T 6311 8195 | E cafe.mosaic@carltonhotel.sg

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HOTEL | SINGAPORE

76 Bras Basah Road | Singapore 189558
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mail@carltonhotel.sg | www.carltonhotel.sg

CNY TAKEAWAY GOODIES 21 January - 19 February 2019

SIGNATURE! Alaskan Crab "Lo Hei"

Small \$138nett Large \$238nett

POPULAR! Longevity Poon Choi

Small 6 pax \$408nett Large 10 pax \$688nett

Baby Abalone, Scallops, Sea Cucumber, Dried Oysters, Roasted Duck, Live Prawns, Pork Shank, Fishballs, Mushrooms, Black Moss, Tianjin Cabbage, Radish, Yam

Marinated Fortune Chicken \$245nett with 8-head Abalone

NEW! \$22.80nett | 250gm Deep-fried Fish Skin with Egg Yolk

Traditional Nian Gao \$25nett

SIGNATURE! \$28nett | 8 pcs Carlton Premium Pineapple Tarts

Enjoy 15% off selected CNY Takeaway Goodies from 21 January - 4 February 2019 with selected credit/debit card.

Online purchases are available at www.signatures.carltonhotel.sg

T 6349 1292 | E restaurants@carltonhotel.sg

Prices are subject to service charge and GST unless otherwise stated.



Wah Lok
Cantonese
Restaurant

**Head to Hua Ting
Restaurant at Orchard Hotel
Singapore to satisfy your
yu sheng cravings**

BY BRYANT CHAN

Every year, Hua Ting Restaurant at Orchard Hotel Singapore surprises and delights diners with new offerings made of the finest ingredients.

This year, the Hua Ting master chefs have outdone themselves with the Smoked Salmon "Lo Hei" Yu Sheng with Organic Seasonal Greens and Red Plum Sauce (\$88++ for small, \$148++ for large). The Red Plum Sauce, meticulously prepared through authentic traditional methods, was specially chosen to represent good fortune.

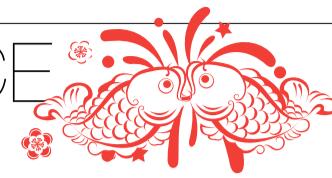
But what really makes the yu sheng here stand out is the inclusion of specially-imported crystal ice plant, which adds a unique, crunchy texture to the dish beyond that offered by the typical golden crackers and jellyfish in other yu sheng.

Hua Ting is also renowned for the freshness of its seafood, and one needs to look no further than the Live Australian Lobster, Salmon Roe and Abalone Yu Sheng (\$588++ for 10 persons) to confirm this. Other seafood variations offered by the restaurant include the Fresh Toro Yu Sheng (\$198++ for small, \$388++ for large), the Sliced Abalone Yu Sheng and the Fresh Hamachi Yu Sheng (each \$78++ for small, \$138++ for large). Call 6739-6666 for more information.



Smoked Salmon "Lo Hei" Yu Sheng. PHOTO: ORCHARD HOTEL SINGAPORE

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Celebrate the Peranakan way

Swissôtel Merchant Court's Nonya-inspired offerings are sure to please

BY NIVANI ELANGOVAN

Ellenborough Market Café at Swissôtel Merchant Court, Singapore will be having its annual Prosperity Buffet from Jan 18 to Feb 19. Expect a decadent spread of seafood on ice, barbecued pork, drunken chicken and more.

The main course options are sure to excite, with a menu that includes smoked salmon yu sheng, roast chicken and pork belly, ayam buah keluak and Nonya chap chye.

But dessert is where Peranakan flavours really shine. Feast on Nonya kueh, kueh dadar, steamed nian gao with grated coconut and the signature durian pengat.

The buffet lunch is priced at \$68++ for adults and \$34++ for children.

TAKE THESE HOME

The Prosperity Smoked Kurobuta Pork Yu Sheng (\$88 net for 10 diners) is an indulgent blend of smoked kurobuta pork and smoked salmon with lemon and plum sauce.

Alternatively, try the Braised Buddha's Temptation Claypot (\$428 net for 10 diners), packed with baby abalone, roasted pork belly, dried scallops, sea cucumber, tiger prawns and more.

Order before Jan 31 to receive a 20 per cent discount.

E-mail dining.merchantcourt@swissotel.com or call 6239-1847/1848 for details.



Dig into the Prosperity Buffet at Ellenborough Market Café.
PHOTO: SWISSÔTEL MERCHANT COURT, SINGAPORE

Usher in the Year of the Boar

18 JANUARY - 19 FEBRUARY 2019

Start the Year of the Boar on an auspicious note with our celebratory creations, roast delights and perennial Peranakan favourites including *Salmon Yu Sheng*, *Steamed Garoupa "Teochew Style"*, *Braised Dried Oyster with Black Moss in Tianjin Cabbage* and more.

Delight your friends and family with our Prosperity Takeaway Treats such as *Abalone Yu Sheng*, *Kurobuta Pork Yu Sheng*, *Braised Buddha's Temptation Claypot*, *Chinese Roast Combination Platter* and more.

PROSPERITY BUFFET LUNCH
ADULT: \$S68 CHILD: \$34

PROSPERITY BUFFET DINNER
ADULT: \$S88 CHILD: \$S44

PROSPERITY WEEKEND BUFFET HIGH TEA
ADULT: \$S48 CHILD: \$S24

PROSPERITY TAKEAWAY TREATS
FROM \$S38 ONWARDS

Orders to be made by 15 February 2019.
Enjoy 20% discount for orders made before 31 January 2019.



For enquiries and reservations,
please call 6239 1847/1848 or email dining.merchantcourt@swissotel.com.

Prices are subject to 10% service charge and prevailing government taxes for the Prosperity Buffet.
Prices are nett and include 7% GST for the Prosperity Takeaway Treats.

swissôtel MERCHANT COURT
SINGAPORE

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



A festive pork feast

Welcome the Year of the Pig with these delightful treats

USHER IN THE LUNAR NEW YEAR 2019

FESTIVE TAKEAWAYS*

8 JAN – 19 FEB
www.peachgardeneshop.com

Golden Premium Black Gold Black Garlic Pen Cai
\$568+ for 10 persons

6-Head Abalone, Tientsin Cabbage, Radish, Cloud Fungus, Duck Web, Dried Oyster, Sea Cucumber, Mushroom, Fish Maw, Pig's Trotter, Conpoy, Black Moss, Black Gold Black Garlic

Deluxe Pen Cai
\$428+ for 10 persons

8-Head Abalone, Tientsin Cabbage, Cloud Fungus, Pork Belly, Roasted Sliced Duck, Yam, Mushroom, Sea Cucumber, Dried Oyster, Prawn, Scallop, Black Moss

Mini Deluxe Pen Cai
\$298+ for 6 persons

8-Head Abalone, Tientsin Cabbage, Cloud Fungus, Pork Belly, Roasted Sliced Duck, Yam, Mushroom, Sea Cucumber, Dried Oyster, Prawn, Scallop, Black Moss

Prices are inclusive of 7% GST
*Delivery charge at \$25+ to 1 location applies

ONLINE CATERING

18 JAN – 19 FEB
www.peachgardencatering.com.sg

Order online and enjoy Peach Garden sumptuous Lunar New Year dishes at the comfort of your home.

Buffet Menu prices starting from

For Lunch (9-Course)	\$38++ per person
For Dinner (10 & 13-Course)	\$48++ per person

Enquiries for festive goodies & takeaways or catering, please email: banquet@peachgarden.com.sg or call us at 6252 9833

For Restaurant Reservations

OCBC CENTRE	: 6535 7833	ORCHID COUNTRY CLUB	: 6759 3833	CHANGI AIRPORT T2	: 6386 3033
THOMSON PLAZA	: 6451 3233	CHINATOWN POINT	: 6702 0603	NTU BLK N2.1	: 6219 9398
HOTEL MIRAMAR	: 6736 3833	THE METROPOLIS	: 6334 7833		

SHOP ONLINE at www.peachgardeneshop.com for more Chinese New Year Goodies & Takeaways

First 80 customers with min. spend of \$200nett, FREE delivery service (U.P. \$26.75)
Promo code: PGCNY19

RESTAURANTS DINING
18 JAN – 19 FEB (BUSINESS AS USUAL)
www.peachgarden.com.sg/promotions

Reunion Set Menu prices starting from

OCBC Centre	\$1099++ per table
Thomson Plaza	\$798++ per table
Hotel Miramar	\$798++ per table
Orchid Country Club	\$798++ per table
The Metropolis	\$798++ per table
Chinatown Point	\$798++ per table
Changi Airport T2	\$838++ per table
NTU Blk N2.1	\$698++ per table

20% OFF
Lunar New Year Eve (4 Feb) Reunion Lunch for Bank of China, Citibank, DBS, OCBC & UOB credit cardmembers.

BY REBECCA RACHEL WONG

FESTIVE FUN

When it comes to hearty reunion offerings, Peach Blossoms restaurant at Marina Mandarin Singapore has everything from treasure pots to barbecued meats and scrumptious snacks.

Add a little fun to your festivities with the new Golden Pig-shaped Nian Gao (\$38.80+ per piece). Accompanied with purple sweet potato nian gao and mochi, the dish makes for an Instagram-worthy addition to your reunion platter.

Other crowd-pleasers are the Taro and Radish Cake with Preserved Meat Nian Gao (\$32.80+ per piece) and Crispy Roasted Pork (\$48+ per 500g).

Call 6845-1118 for enquiries.



Cute porker: The Golden Pig-shaped Nian Gao.
PHOTO: MARINA MANDARIN SINGAPORE

FIT FOR A KING

Feast to your heart's content with Goodwood Park Hotel's pork-centric Abundant Feasting Specials. A standout is the Prosperity Duo of Deep-fried Pork Knuckle and Slow-baked Honey Butter Ribs (\$147.65 net for takeaway for six persons), a mouth-watering combination of contrasting flavours.

Another must-try is the Slow-braised Pig's Trotter with Abalone and Sea Treasures in Claypot (\$298++ for dining in; \$318.85 net for takeaway for six persons, includes claypot). Known for its collagen content, the trotter is braised for four hours and further steamed with the rest of the ingredients.

Call 6730-1704 for enquiries.



The Prosperity Duo of Deep-fried Pork Knuckle and Slow-baked Honey Butter Ribs. PHOTO: GOODWOOD PARK HOTEL

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Lavish lo hei

Ramp up the luxe factor with these yu sheng platters from Pan Pacific Singapore

BY CHARMAINE CHAN

Forget cold salmon and tasteless shreds of cabbage. Think lobster, black truffles and suckling pig instead.

Hai Tien Lo at Pan Pacific Singapore redefines the lo hei (tossing of yu sheng for good fortune) experience by putting together premium ingredients to delight any gourmand's heart.

Here's what to expect:

FORTUNE YU SHENG

Craving something something unusual? This combination of imperial swiftlet's nest, Boston lobster and baby abalone will satisfy your desire. Price: \$128 (serves four to six), \$188 (serves seven to 10).

BLOSSOMING TREASURES YU SHENG

Need to impress a gastronome? This mix of sliced abalone, crispy barbecued suckling pig, deep-fried crab meat sticks and black truffles will do the trick. Price: \$138 (serves four to six), \$198 (serves seven to 10).

WEALTH FORTUNE YU SHENG

Pull out all the stops with this sumptuous selection of lobster, abalone and French scallops sprinkled with gold and silver flakes. Price: \$288 for dine-in only (one size). Please pre-order one day in advance.

Yu sheng platters are available for dine-in or takeaway from Jan 21 to Feb 19. To order, visit pacificmarketplace.sg, e-mail dining.sin@panpacific.com or call 6826-8240.



Usher in the Year of the Pig with this Wealth Fortune Yu Sheng platter from Hai Tien Lo. PHOTO: PAN PACIFIC SINGAPORE

PAN PACIFIC SINGAPORE

Blossoming Spring Reunions

Herald in the Year of the Pig with auspicious culinary creations at Hai Tien Lo.

HAI TIEN LO
21 January to 19 February 2019
Select from nine impeccable set menus, six indulgent Yu Sheng Platters and two Traditional Treasure Pots for a prosperous Chinese New Year feast.

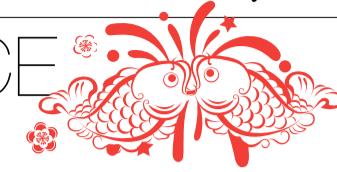
CHINESE NEW YEAR TAKEAWAY GOODIES
21 January to 19 February 2019
Elevate your celebrations with our Home-made Caramel Walnuts with Sesame Seeds, exquisite Lapis Surabaya, Homemade Pork Char Siew Sausage and more.

For dining reservations or enquiries, please speak with us at 6826 8240 or email dining.ppsin@panpacific.com

海天樓
HAI TIEN LO

Australia • Bangladesh • Canada • China • Malaysia • Myanmar • Philippines • Singapore • United States • Vietnam DISCOVERY®  PAN PACIFIC HOTELS GROUP

CHINESE NEW YEAR: ABUNDANCE



Three ways to feast

Whether you are celebrating with family or colleagues, Sheraton Towers Singapore will impress



Left: Lobster and Abalone Fortune Pot. Above: Dine on Chinese New Year set menus. PHOTOS: SHERATON TOWERS SINGAPORE

BY MEREDITH WOO

DINE AT LI BAI

New festive dishes to savour at the hotel's Li Bai Cantonese Restaurant include the Nian Gao with Cane Sugar and Apricot (\$50) and Salmon Roe and Hamachi Loh Hei Platter (\$98 for small, \$178 for large). Both dishes are available for dine-in and takeaway.

Li Bai's set menus (from \$84++ per person) will impress as well, with new offerings such as Braised Superior Bird's Nest with Lobster Claw, and Stewed Fish Noodles with Alaskan Crabmeat and XO Chilli Sauce.

Call 6839-5623 or e-mail libai@sheratonsingapore.com for details.

BOUNTEOUS BUFFET

You can also treat yourself to a buffet at The Dining Room (from \$68++ per adult). The spread includes dishes such as Roasted Angus Striploin with Butter Cereal Crust, and Four Treasure Soup (Chinese New Year's eve and day only).

Call 6839-5621 or e-mail thedinningroom@sheratonsingapore.com for details.

FESTIVE FUNCTIONS

Or up the ante with a meal in the hotel's function room (from \$888++ for a table of 10 people). You will feast on a Chinese set menu by Li Bai Cantonese Restaurant, with a dedicated banquet manager on site.

Call 6839-5845 or e-mail catering@sheratonsingapore.com for details.



Sheraton
TOWERS SINGAPORE

Convivial Celebrations

Prosperity Reunions

21 January to 19 February 2019

Kindle the blessings of Spring at our elegantly-appointed function venues that are comprehensively equipped to cater for every celebration size and need. Toast and toss to auspicious beginnings with a fine assortment of exquisite cuisines perfect for a grand reunion with loved ones and business associates.

Festive Getaway

25 January to 28 February 2019

Spring into a bountiful new year with an invigorating getaway in the comfort of our well-appointed rooms. Sweeten the holidays with a sumptuous breakfast buffet spread and complimentary Cocktail of The Month for two.

Li Bai Cantonese Restaurant

19 January to 19 February 2019

Usher in the joyous Spring season on an indulgent note with an exquisite selection of eight celebratory dine-in menus, featuring an assortment of finest culinary treasures specially curated for various group sizes. Delectable festive takeaway goodies are also available for a grand reunion at home.

The Dining Room

21 January to 6 February 2019

The Lunar New Year is not without heartwarming reunions and hearty feastings. Bask in the merriment of the season with a treasure trove of international delicacies and local festive delights.

For dining reservations and enquiries, please call:

Li Bai Cantonese Restaurant / Auspicious Takeaways - 6839 5623 | The Dining Room - 6839 5621
For prosperity banquet, please call 6839 5845 or email catering@sheratonsingapore.com.
For room reservations, please call 6839 5755 or email reservations@sheratonsingapore.com.

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